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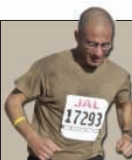
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Lt. Mike Baskin of Santiago, Calif.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2004

A devastating loss

On Sept. 20, Shadow Platoon lost its heart and soul in an Iraqi ambush. Months later, Spc. Joshua Henry's comrades still mourn his death.

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Iraq — Sgt. Collin MacInnes carefully crosses off each day of his long, bitter Iraq adventure on the calendar. All except Sept. 20. That was the day Shadow Platoon lost its heart and soul.

His name was Spc. Joshua Henry, a gregarious 21-year-old from Avonmore, Pa. A muscle-bound gym rat, he had starred on his undefeated high school football team. A trained sniper, he could shoot better than almost anyone in Battery A of the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery. He never missed a chance to joke or wisecrack with his buddies.

SEE SOLDIER ON PAGE 4



Spc. Joshua Henry

Left: The soldiers of Shadow Platoon of the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery still mourn for Spc. Joshua Henry, 21, above, who died in an ambush Sept. 20. Front row, from left: Sgt. Collin MacInnes; Pfc. Kyle Hledinsky; Sgt. 1st Class Erick Macher; Capt. Jason Ebert; and Spc. Jarren Kealoha. Second row, from left: Pvt. Shannon Squires; Pvt. Michael Gallagher; and Spc. Jerome Braganza. Back row, from left: Staff Sgt. Jose Rojo; Staff Sgt. Dan Sowell; and Spc. Travis Harney.

ABOVE: Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army

LEFT: PHOTO BY STEVE LIEWER/Stars and Stripes

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPHER SIX/Stars and Stripes

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Ohio nightclub shooting: Mourners attended a funeral Saturday for one of the four victims of a nightclub shooting, a fan of "Dinobag" Darrell Abbott who a witness said had tried to save the heavy-metal guitarist.

While most concertgoers rushed for the exits after Abbott was shot by a longtime fan of his former group, Pantera, Nathan Brum jumped up on stage, held Abbott and tried to perform CPR, said Adam Vanover, 45, of Bellefontaine.

"When [Bray] looked up at the shooter that's when the shooter shot him," Vanover said.

About 200 people attended a private, two-hour service Saturday for Bray, 23, at a funeral home in his hometown of Circleville, about 30 miles south of Columbus.

Popcorn-lung trial: A liability lawsuit against the manufacturers of an artificial butter flavoring used at a popcorn plant has ended in a settlement.

Attorneys for plaintiff Samantha Taftner and defendants International Flavors and Fragrances and Bush Boake Allen Inc., which International purchased in 2006, told Jasper County Associate Judge Stephen Carlton they reached a deal Friday, after a 10-day trial.

Taftner, 28, is one of about 30 former workers at the Gilester-Mary Lee Corp. plant in Jasper and their spouses who have sued the manufacturers, claiming they should have known the chemical diacetyl, used to make the butter flavoring, causes lung damage.

World

Afghan drug crackdown: Afghan and British officials preparing a crackdown on Afghanistan's booming illegal narcotics industry began training a legal task force Sunday for special courts they hope will begin jailing heroin and opium kingpins within months.

The six-week course opened at the headquarters of Afghanistan's new Counter Narcotics Police in the Afghan capital, officials said, under a plan to give specialist skills to 35 investigators, 35 prosecutors and 15 judges.

A secure court and prison facility is being set up at a notorious prison near Kabul to house the first convicts by the middle of 2005.

Arrest in U.N. hostage-taking: A dissident member of a militant Islamic group that kidnapped three U.N. workers in Afghanistan provided the tip that led to the arrest of the organization's top leader, a Pakistani security official said Sunday.

Syed Akbar Agha, a former Taliban front-line commander in Afghanistan who later founded Jaish-e-Millat, or Army of Muslims, was captured in the southern city of Karachi last week.

A security official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said a dissident member of Agha's group provided the location of an apartment where the leader was living with his family.

Iran nuclear talks: Iran and the European Union will begin comprehensive talks on Tehran's nuclear activities this week, official media reported Sunday.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, will meet foreign ministers of Britain, France, Germany and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana in a joint session. The timing of that meeting was not clear.

Last month, Iran reached an agreement with the three European nations to suspend its nuclear enrichment and related activities while negotiating a long-term settlement with the EU on its nuclear program.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is monitoring the suspension.

Filipino politician in coma: An action film



Taiwan election: Chen Shien-ming, front, a Taiwanese lawmaker with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), cruises the streets of Taipei on Sunday on top of a jeep thanking voters for their support. Three opposition parties teamed up Saturday to defeat President Chen Shui-bian's pro-independence coalition, in an election expected to calm U.S. fears that the island was headed toward a conflict with rival China.

star who narrowly lost this year's Philippines presidential elections and then sought to nullify President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's victory has suffered a stroke and is in a coma, his spokesman said Sunday.

Fernando Poe Jr. complained of dizziness while drinking and dining with friends and employees in his suburban Manila film studio. He was brought late Saturday to a hospital, where he was in an intensive-care unit, said his spokesman, Rep. Francis Escudero.

Poe, 65, later slipped into a coma and doctors there would make more tests over the next 72 hours to predict his chances of recovery, Escudero told reporters.

Somalia government sacked: Somalia's parliament has passed a no-confidence motion against the country's new prime minister and his Cabinet, sacking a government that was sworn in less than two weeks ago in an attempt to end 15 years of anarchy in the Horn of Africa nation.

Dalhar Omar, deputy speaker of the 275-member transitional parliament, said Saturday 153 members voted against Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi, accusing him of failing to respect power-sharing arrangements reached in complex talks involving warlords and leaders of the country's main clans.

Legislators also accused Gedi of violating the constitution by failing to seek a vote of confidence within 40 days after he was appointed to his post by the president, Omar said in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

Darfur crisis: Egypt said Sunday that Sudan is working to solve the crisis in Darfur but needed more international assistance, not criticism.

Following talks between Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Sudanese leader Omar el-Bashir, Mubarak's spokesman urged the international community to redouble its efforts to end the crisis.

Nearly two years of fighting in Sudan's western Darfur region has killed tens of thousands and left nearly 2 million homeless.

On Saturday, government negotiators resumed talks with representatives of the Darfur rebel groups in Abuja, Nigeria.

Foreign ministers of Sudan's neighboring countries were to open talks late Sunday in Cairo to discuss the Darfur crisis with Sudan's Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail, who is accompanying el-Bashir in

Egypt.

Gaza-Egypt border explosion: A tunnel filled with explosives detonated Sunday under the Israeli checkpoint on the Gaza-Egypt border near the town of Rafah, military officials said.

The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said there were Israeli casualties. The Israeli rescue service ZAKA said three people were seriously wounded. Israeli Radio said seven people were being treated at the scene.

A Palestinian militant giving his name only as Abu Majad said gunmen attacked the Israeli position after the blast. He claimed responsibility in the name of the Fatah Hawks, an offshoot of the mainstream Fatah Party, and the violent Islamic Hamas.

Romanian election: Romanians cast their votes Sunday in a presidential runoff between Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, a political veteran of Romania's former communist era, and Western-leaning Bucharest Mayor Traian Basescu.

The winner takes over from President Ion Iliescu, who has led Romania for 11 of the past 15 years. He will have to try to form a government to lead the country through economic and judicial reforms aimed at joining European Union membership in 2007.

About 25 percent of Romania's 18 million eligible voters had cast their ballots by 2 p.m.

War on terrorism

Hostages released: A Sri Lankan truck driver held hostage by Iraqi militants for 43 days returned to the island Sunday.

Dinesh Dharmendra Rajaratnam, 37, was in Iraq working for a Kuwaiti-based transport company when he was abducted along with a Bangladeshi colleague, Abul Kashem, near a U.S. military base.

Kashem, 42, is expected to return home soon, officials said.

Gitmo review tribunals: A 28-year-old Iraqi man accused of fighting for the ousted Taliban regime five years ago appeared Saturday before a military review tribunal in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, an official said.

The military accused the prisoner of fighting against the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in 1999, said Navy Lt. Gary Ross, spokesman for the Combatant Status Review Tribunals. His identity was not released.

The military did not say whether the detainee was still fighting for the Taliban when the United States declared hostilities against Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

Pre-election violence claims Marine, soldier

Insurgents attack Iraqi troops in Baghdad

BY SAMEER N. YACOB

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A U.S. Marine was killed in Iraq's volatile Anbar province Sunday and another soldier died in a roadside bombing, while suicide car bombers hit American military vehicles west and north of the capital, killing three attackers but causing no coalition casualties.

Also Sunday, insurgents fired mortars and rocket-propelled grenades at Iraqi National Guardsmen in downtown Baghdad as part of a campaign to derail next month's nationwide elections and target Iraqi forces who collaborate with U.S.-led troops. There were no casualties reported. A day earlier insurgent attacks left three senior Iraqi police officers dead.

The U.S. military said in a statement that a Marine assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action Sunday "while conducting security and stabilization operations" in Anbar province, a vast region comprising the battleground cities of Fallujah and Ramadi west of Baghdad. The Marine was the second to die in combat in two days in Anbar.

Meanwhile, a roadside bomb killed a U.S. Marine in Baghdad south of the capital's northern suburbs and wounded three other troops Saturday, the military said. Fourteen troops were wounded in separate attacks in northern Iraq, including a car bomb in Amman, a northern city of Mosul that woulded eight.

Four decapitated bodies in civilian clothes were found south of Baghdad and their identities were unclear, police said. The victims, believed to be Iraqis, were found in Hawsa, about 25 miles south of the capital.

Two insurgents killed themselves after detonating their blue explosives-packed car alongside an American M1 Abrams battle tank in Tikrit, 80 miles north of Baghdad, at about 10:45 a.m., military spokesman Staff Sgt. Robert Powell said. No

others were wounded and the tank sustained negligible damage.

Another suicide car bomber attacked a U.S. convoy early Sunday on the road between Haditha and Ramawi, about 150 miles northwest of Baghdad. There were no U.S. casualties, the military said.

Elsewhere, Iraqi Red Crescent Society workers returned to Fallujah to restart operations after being withdrawn Dec. 5 because of security concerns.

Red Crescent, the sister organization of the International Committee of the Red Cross, is the only humanitarian aid group operating in Fallujah, which was badly damaged by last month's U.S.-led offensive against insurgents.

Red Crescent ambulances brought food, water and medical workers to the city to provide for the few residents who remained in the city during the fighting. Most of its 300,000 people fled the fighting to camps on the city's outskirts.

In northern Iraq, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan militiamen said they had detained an Australian man of Lebanese origin, Ahmed Jalal, 22, was recently arrested in Sulaimaniyah, 160 miles northeast of Baghdad, a PUK official said on condition of anonymity.

Julie McDonald, a spokeswoman for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, confirmed PUK forces had detained a Sydney man and that "authorities... are looking into (the) possible terrorist connections of the detained 22-year-old." She did not elaborate.

Also Sunday, guerrillas killed a security guard of the Iraqi Northern Oil Company near one of its Kirkuk oilfields, officials said. No further details were immediately available.

The guerrillas regressed the Jan. 30 elections as an effort to legitimize a puppet government that will serve U.S. interests.

Shiites comprise 60 percent of the country's 26 million people and are expected to perform strongly in the elections. Their de-



At dawn Sunday, U.S. Marine Cpl. Jason Williams, of Pierre, S.D., mans a machine gun from inside the turret of an armored Humvee, helping to provide security for a convoy of engineering equipment traveling from one base to another in Ramadi, Iraq.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Saturday, at least 1,287 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,007 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 74 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Nether-

lands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,149 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 898 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A U.S. Marine was killed Saturday in Iraq's Anbar province.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ No identifications reported.

termination to take part in the poll is enjoyed some Sunni Arabs, who enjoying greater privileges under the rule of Saddam Hussein, to decide whether to keep up calls for a postment or jump into the campaign.

Iraq's government says the vote will proceed as scheduled on Jan. 30, despite

Sunni objections.

U.S. soldiers and Iraqi police detained more than 50 Iraqis in raids north of Baghdad, the military said Sunday. Soldiers seized a range of firearms and other weapons in the two raids Saturday in Hib Hib, a town about 40 miles northeast of Baghdad.

Report: \$50 bounty offered on coalition troops

CANBERRA, Australia — Contract killers are being offered as little as \$50 to target coalition soldiers in Iraq, the commander of Australia's 350 soldiers in Iraq last month, said Iraqi insurgents were hiring assassins from neighboring Middle Eastern countries with the promise of cash payments for every soldier they killed.

"This is a difficult adversary," he told Sydney's The Sunday Telegraph newspaper. "The insurgency is not a coherent force." He added, "We are seeing suicide bombers brought in from outside Iraq and paid \$50 for contract killings. These forces are a general threat to the coalition."

Fire at plant knocks out power to much of Iraq

BAGHDAD — A large swath of Iraq lost electricity Sunday after a fire broke out in a major power plant north of Baghdad.

The capital went dark at about 4 p.m. and power was still out at 7 p.m. The only lights in the city were from the Green Zone and a few other places that rely on their own generators.

Witnesses in several other parts of the country — Basra to the south and Najaf to the southwest — also reported having no power. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, speaking from a live broadcast on the Iraqi television network, said the fire in the Beiji power plant, 155 miles north of Baghdad, was apparently an accident. Yet he also accused Iraq's insurgents of indiscriminate attacks that only hurt regular Iraqis.

"I'd like to say that, unfortunately, some forces working to hurt the country don't make a distinction in their attacks," Allawi said. "They strike the economic positions and the infrastructure network in a way that harms the whole Iraqi society."

From The Associated Press

Karzai: Bin Laden 'definitely' in region

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan President Hamid Karzai said Sunday that Osama bin Laden is "definitely" in the region and will eventually be caught, even though American and Pakistani generals insist the trail is cold.

"It's very difficult to say where he is hiding. He cannot be away from this region. He's definitely in the region," Karzai told CNN's Late Edition. "We will get him sooner or later, trust me on that."

Speculation on bin Laden's whereabouts has long focused on the mountains along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the al-Qaida leader slipped away from Afghan and U.S. forces three years ago.

Pakistan's army has mounted a series of bloody offensives against foreign fighters near the border this year, and American forces launched a winter-long operation last week against Taliban rebels on the Afghan side.

But there has been no indication they are close to seizing the suspected mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States that prompted President Bush to launch Operation Enduring Freedom with an assault on Afghanistan.

Pressed in the CNN interview, recorded Sunday

in the Afghan capital, Karzai declined to say whether bin Laden could be in Afghanistan, or in Pakistan. He said he knew of no suggestion the al-Qaida leader could be in neighboring Iran.

"But we can definitely say he's around this region and he can't run forever," Karzai said.

Even though bin Laden remains at large, and Taliban militants continue to kill Afghan and U.S. soldiers despite an offer of amnesty, Karzai has said he is more alarmed at Afghanistan's booming narcotics industry, which the United Nations says is turning it into a "narco-state."

U.S. and British counter-narcotics experts are training Afghan security forces who have already begun destroying drug stockpiles, smashing refining laboratories and arresting traffickers.

Plans are also being laid to punish farmers by destroying opium poppy crops in key growing regions early next year. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of dollars are earmarked to help them switch to less lucrative but legal crops.

Karzai said Afghans were "embarrassed" to be the world's biggest suppliers of opium and heroin.

"I promise you, and I like that American people and the rest of the world should know this, that we will fight poppy," he said.

"We know it hurts us, it hurts you, it hurts everybody. So we will fight it."

Soldier: Months later, platoon still mourns

SOLDIER, FROM PAGE 1

Henry attracted children like a magnet. Iraqi youngsters swarmed around him, and he could play with them for hours. In the towns where Shadow Platoon patrolled, kids who didn't speak English would run up to the soldiers shouting, "Henry! Henry!" searching every face for their playmate.

After the Army, the tattooed sharpshooter planned to become a kindergarten teacher.

"He had one of the kindest hearts of anybody I've ever known," said Spc. Travis Harney, 20, of Winchester, Ky., who rode with Henry the day he died.

Sept. 20 remains unmarked on MacInnes' calendar.

"That day never ended for me," said MacInnes, 22, of Stockton, Calif. "He was Alpha Battery. He defined who we were."

A day like all others

The day began like any other, with Shadow Platoon rising early to escort the battery's executive officer to Ash Sharqat for a city council meeting.

Ash Sharqat lies at the edge of Salah ad Din province, 200 miles north of Baghdad. Although it is dominated by Sunni Muslims and is in Saddam Hussein's home province, it suffered from neglect under his regime because nearly all of its residents belong to a different tribe from the deposed dictator. The insurgency hadn't taken hold there.

"Usually, (we had) an extremely friendly response in Ash Sharqat," said Capt. Jason Ebert, 25, of Wayne, Pa., who commanded the convoy. That day, he said, started out the same way.

The convoy included six Humvees. The 40-mile drive from Summerall to Ash Sharqat took more than an hour. The soldiers stood guard until the meeting ended at 12:30 p.m.

Oddly, few people milled about in the usually crowded streets after the meeting — often a sign of trouble, because insurgents will frequently put out word when they are planning to attack.

"That was the only thing really out of the ordinary," said Sgt. Eric Parsons, 28, of Charleston, W.Va., one of two Army journalists on the trip, from the Ohio-based 196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. "I probably put a lot of people (on edge), made them more alert."

A few minutes down the road, in the village of Huni, the soldiers heard gunfire. The convoy stopped, soldiers dismounted, ready to shoot.

Suddenly, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire rained down. The insurgents fired from at least five different entrenched positions.

"That's the first time the enemy seemed like they were intent on fighting," said Staff Sgt. Dan Sowell, 30, of Vidalia, Ga. "Usually they'd just shoot and run."

Within seconds, the whole platoon manned its guns and returned fire. Luckily the rebels' first fusillade had missed.

Each Humvee crew picked different tar-



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army

Spc. Joshua Henry was a tattooed bodybuilder who razed his buddies to no end. But he had a soft spot for children, who were drawn to him like a magnet. He planned to be a kindergarten teacher after leaving the Army. He was killed in an insurgent ambush Sept. 20.

gets with their rifles and mounted machine guns.

"The fight was different for every vehicle," Ebert said. "I thought we could overcome them with the .50-cal's."

They did. In the fifth Humvee, for example, MacInnes, Harney and Spc. Timothy Schrack destroyed first a six-man enemy squad, then a two-man machine gun nest. Then they engaged fighters shooting grenades from behind a concrete wall.

'We're getting out of here'

Ebert, in the second vehicle, stood next to Henry, his driver, firing their weapons over the top of the Humvee. But some of the enemy had maneuvered behind them.

Suddenly a shot knocked Ebert to the ground. He looked and saw that Henry, too had been hit in the side, a bullet passing clear through him where his armored vest was weakest.

"He jerked up," Ebert recalled. "I said to myself, 'Oh (expletive). He made a noise, but he put the rifle back up on his shoulder."

Henry's one of those guys — he's just strong as an ox."

But the rifle fire kept coming. Two more bullets hit Henry in the legs, finally knocking him down. Ebert screamed for a medic, and Sgt. 1st Class Erick Macher, 30, of Sacramento, Calif., pulled his Humvee up next to Henry and loaded him aboard.

"We said, 'Screw it, we're getting out of here,'" MacInnes said.

The convoy raced off to Tinderness, a nearby firebase with a tiny aid station. A civilian physician's assistant and a Task

Force 1-7 medic, Spc. Luis Song, 22, of Miami, did all they could to keep Henry alive.

The first bullet collapsed his lung, ruptured his spleen and hit his spine.

"They stuck a needle in (his chest) to try and help him breathe," said Pfc. Kyle Hledinsky, 21, of Elwood City, Pa., who held a pressure dressing on the side wound while Pvt. Shannon Squires, 24, of Virginia Beach, Va., did the same to the badly bleeding leg wound.

A medevac helicopter from Tikrit got there an hour later and took him to the 67th Combat Support Hospital in Tikrit. The platoon started on the long drive back to Summerall without Macher and Henry.

"That was the quietest ride," MacInnes said.

Meanwhile, medics gave Henry artificial respiration, who was still somewhat alert, Macher said. "I tried to get closer to him, but the medics kept pushing me away."

At the hospital, he waited anxiously outside the emergency room. Doctors and nurses kept giving him conflicting reports on his friend's condition. Once they came outside, looking for blood donors, but Macher's was the wrong type.

Two hours after they arrived, a doctor came out with the bad news. Henry had lost too much blood. He didn't make it.

'A Better Place'

Shadow Platoon grieved quietly. The next day, a combat stress team came and

talked to them, and two days later the base held a tearful memorial service. The task force commander, Lt. Col. Kyle McClelland, ordered Summerall's gym — Henry's favorite hangout — renamed in his honor.

"I still expect to see him in there sometimes," Ebert said.

Henry posthumously earned a Bronze Star with Valor, as well as a Purple Heart and an Army Commendation Medal. Eight other men, including Schrack and Harney, have been nominated for valor awards.

Ebert wrestles with his conscience. Henry had been assigned to a platoon operating the 1-7 Field Artillery's howitzers, a job that kept him at Summerall all the time. He begged Ebert for months to rejoin Shadow Platoon so he could patrol with his buddies. Ebert had relented and moved him just two weeks before the fatal mission.

"It's so hard to lose him," Ebert said.

Hledinsky, home in October on his mid-tour leave, visited Henry's parents, Larry and Perri, and three of his six brothers and sisters at their home in Pennsylvania.

"I was nervous at first. I didn't know what I'd say or what I'd do," Hledinsky said. "But once I met them, I felt like I'd known them my entire life."

MacInnes left Sept. 20 unmarked on his calendar. Back in California, he had once played in a country metal band. Now he got out the acoustic guitar and penned a quieter song that expressed his sadness over his lost buddy. He called it "A Better Place."

E-mail: Steve Liewer at: liewers@mail.estrates.com



MacInnes



Macher



Ebert

As 13th COSCOM heads home, 1st moves in

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq — After supplying the fighting force in Iraq for one year with everything from bullets to beans to tires and toilet paper, the 13th Corps Support Command cased its colors Sunday and began its return to Fort Hood, Texas.

At the same time, the 1st Corps Support Command from Fort Bragg, N.C., uncased its colors to take over a mission that makes few headlines, but is vital to the effort to rid Iraq of its insurgents.

"Our success is your success," said Lt. Gen. Thomas F. Metz, the commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

Metz was the reviewing officer and featured speaker at the ceremony, which was driven indoors by rain.

He listed a few staggering statistics to illustrate the efforts of 13th COSCOM since it arrived in Iraq in January. It has delivered 3.6 million cases of meals, ready to eat, 433 million gallons of fuel and \$1 billion worth of ammunition.

Its 2,300 vehicles that are on the road daily to supply the force have covered more than 640 million miles.

That equals more than 1,300



round trips to the moon, the general said.

"I hope that each of you takes great pride in what you've accomplished this year," he said. "Your service has been outstanding."

Brig. Gen. James E. Chambers, the commander of 13th COSCOM, had some statistics of his own, some of them sobering.

At times, he said, the command varied in size from 14,500 to 17,500 troops, including active-duty, National Guard and Re-

serve troops.

Of those, he said, 38 lost their lives, including 17 National Guard members, 13 Army Reservists, six active-duty soldiers and two airmen. Their average age was 26 and they came from 19 different states and territories.

The command's troops were awarded 302 Purple Hearts.

"We still today have a soldier captive," he said. "Spec. Matt Maupin will be in our prayers until he gets home."

Maupin, 29, went missing on April 9 when a convoy was ambushed west of Baghdad. The Army has listed him as captured.

"We came without armored vehicles," Chambers continued. "We've armored 3,000 of these vehicles while we were here."

Chambers, who is from Marietta, Okla., thanked his staff and his soldiers for a successful completion of the mission they were given.

"We can go home with our



heads high and our backs straight," he said.

Brig. Gen. Yves J. Fontaine, commander of the 1st COSCOM, thanked Chambers for providing his command with a warm welcome and for handling the mission in a professional manner.

"We promise you, we'll maintain the high standards," he said.

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensen@mail.esrpress.osd.mil

Far from home, troops in field shop for the holidays

BY WARD SANDERSON

Stars and Stripes

American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are clicking and catalog-ordering their way through the holidays.

Troops serving a year in the war zone just can't hop down to Macy's to buy a gift for their sweetie, so they're ordering merchandise from afar, and apparently more so than ever before. According to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, online and catalog sales from both operations are up 29 percent over last holiday season.

Troops without Internet access are also ordering through "Operation Forward Santa," an AAFES initiative allowing them to simply pick an item from a down-range brochure. All troops have to do next is drop the completed order form at the exchange at their post. Everything but gift baskets and flowers are wrapped for Iraq. So far, troops have spent about \$10,000 via the brochures.

"Some guys are obviously in locations where they don't have an Internet connection, or even a phone," said Judd Anstey, spokesman for AAFES headquarters in Dallas.

Beyond the Santa number, Anstey did have a separate figure isolating gift purchases per se. "You can't say what they're buying for," he said. But the most popular items being purchased via catalog, brochure or online from Iraq and Afghanistan are flowers, electronics, jewelry, video games, toys and lingerie. It's probably safe to say the flowers, jewelry, toys and lingerie will find their way under the tree.

Other online retailers may well be seeing the same trends from deployed troops, but proving it is tough. Amazon.com offers gift-wrapping and mail-

ing, but isn't saying how successful it is. Craig Berman, a company spokesman, said the company typically doesn't discuss traffic numbers, and wasn't sure whether Amazon could even discern a servicemember in Baghdad from anyone else.

J.C. Penney maintains a Web page and telephone hot line specifically for customers with military addresses. However, spokeswoman Daphne Avila said the company didn't track the numbers separately.

What are troops buying for themselves as well as others? Electronics and electronic media, at least at AAFES.

"Electronics are a big deal," Anstey said. "There's a lot of free time on their hands."

The exchange has muscled up its online offerings of video games, computers, portable DVD players, music and movies.

Apparently, it's been noted. The December 2004 edition of Consumer Reports said that in a poll of 10,180 readers, AAFES ranked second only to Amazon in the "Best Price" category for home electronics. Just like exchanges in calmer regions, locations downrange sell electronics in store as well as online or via catalog. And holiday catalog spree or not, physical stores apparently still have advantages.

"AAFES sells electronics on and offline," exchange commander Maj. Gen. Kathryn Frost said in a news release. "Offering electronics in brick and mortar environments provides several benefits, not the least of which are the ability to see, touch and compare products as well as the instant gratification mail order can't provide."

E-mail Ward Sanderson at: sanderson@mail.esrpress.osd.mil



An Iraqi woman passes campaign posters in Baghdad on Saturday. The election commission extended the deadline for campaigning candidates' lists for five days after several parties requested more time to prepare their slates.

AP

70 groups register for Iraq vote

BY MARIAM FAM

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Candidates from 70 political parties and coalitions have filed to run in Iraq's upcoming elections, after a number of deadline extensions to ensure wider participation in a vote seen as key for Iraq's democratic transformation.

The Independent Electoral Commission extended a Dec. 10 deadline for submitting candidate lists until Dec. 15 after political groups demanded more time to form alliances and pick candidates, spokesman Farid Ayar said. The deadline already had been extended twice before, he added.

Sixty-four of the lists came from political parties, while six were submitted by coalitions, he said.

The commission has had 233 political entities register with it so far, said Ayar. Only organizations, groups or individuals approved by the electoral commission will be allowed to participate in the Jan. 30 vote.

"We realize this operation is not an easy one and every minute is important for

these groups," Abdul-Hussein Hendawi, the commission's chairman, told Al-Arabiya television.

Campaigning begins next Wednesday and must end 48 hours before polling booths open.

Iraq's election laws treat the entire country as a single constituency.

A party or alliance will win seats in the National Assembly based on the percentage of votes its list receives nationally. The system gives those candidates ranked high on the slate most chances to be voted in.

On Thursday, under the guidance of Iraq's top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a group of political parties and independents announced the creation of a coalition known as the United Iraqi Alliance. The grouping hopes to draw the bulk of the vote from the Shiite majority in Iraq and dominate the future assembly, whose main task will be to draft a new constitution for Iraq.

According to electoral laws, at least one in every three candidates on a single list must be a woman.

Push to speed up Humvee production applauded

U.S. commanders in Iraq welcome DOD effort to provide more armored vehicles

BY KATARINA KRATOVAC
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — U.S. military commanders in Iraq, where bombings pose the deadliest threat to their soldiers, have welcomed news the Pentagon wants to speed up production of upgraded armored Humvees, a military spokesman said Saturday.

The issue of whether the military is providing enough protection for its troops received new attention last week after an Iraq-bound National Guardsman questioned Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld during a visit to neighboring Kuwait on why he and his comrades must scrounge through scrap piles for metal to protect their vehicles.

The Army said Friday it was negotiating with an armor manufacturer, Florida-based Armor Holdings Inc., to accelerate production of upgraded M1114, or Level 1, Humvees. The company said it could boost monthly production from the current 450 vehicles to 550 in February or March.

"Commanders are looking for any opportunity to increase force protection for the sake of their troops," said Maj. Neal O'Brien, spokesman for the Tikrit-based 1st Infantry Division. "Uparmor or add-on armor will always be one of those force protection assets they want more of."

Sgt. Eric Grill, a military spokesman in Baghdad, said the request for boosted production first came in 2003, after homemade roadside bombs — known as improvised explosive devices — emerged as the insurgent weapon of choice in Iraq.

"We recognized this and changed our tactics to deal with the enemy," Grill said.

The most coveted Humvee among troops in Iraq is the M1114, which has protected glass windows and armor on its sides, front, rear, top and bottom.

Almost 6,000 such Humvees already are in Iraq, he added. They cost about \$150,000 each.

Lt. Gen. John Sattler, commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, says the M1114 is the "best up-armored vehicle in the world." It can stop AK-47 bullets, anti-personnel RPGs and most roadside bombs and mines.

"We've had those hit with unbelievable improvised explosive devices, where they have blown the tires and the engine off, crushed up the back and the four Marines or soldiers have gotten out, shaken and were [back] into the fight," Sattler said.

"But sometimes it just takes time to get the assembly line to produce and I guess you can only go so fast in that area."

The second choice for troops here is to add armor to "soft-skinned" Humvees.

"Add-on armor are prefabricated kits that attach to the outside frame of the Humvees to increase force protection and survivability," O'Brien said. The kits can be added either in the United States or in Iraq.

There are about 10,000 Humvees with add-on kits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sattler said the Humvees with add-on armor were "almost protectionally equal on the ground" to an M1114 and would suffice until the military received more of "uparmored" vehicles.

Dangers on ground in Iraq lead to increase airlift use

BY BRADLEY GRAHAM
The Washington Post

AL UDEID AIR BASE, Qatar — To reduce the amount of military cargo hauled in vulnerable convoys across Iraq, the U.S. Air Force has begun airlifting much larger quantities of material to bases around the country.

The stepped-up effort started several weeks ago at the urging of Gen. John Jumper, the Air Force chief of staff, and involves cargo planes carrying vehicles, tank tracks, tires, generators and other goods that normally move over land routes. Such transport is more expensive and less efficient, but senior Air Force officers say the unusual undertaking has become necessary to protect the lives of U.S. troops and civilians who otherwise would attempt to ferry the items by dangerous ground convoys.

"What General Jumper did was basically give me clearance to, in his words, throw away the rule book," said Lt. Gen. Walter E. Buchanan III, the senior commander of U.S. aircraft in the Persian Gulf region. "He is not worried about efficiencies, and so I'm not either."

Convoy security became a hot issue last week when soldiers in Kuwait complained to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld that they were being sent to war without sufficient armored equipment to protect them. Pentagon officials have since issued statements saying that the concerns of the soldiers are being addressed and that armored transportation will

be provided to troops headed into Iraq.

The Air Force initiative reflects the judgment of top military authorities that the threat to the convoys is not likely to diminish soon and that the best way to ensure safe delivery is to avoid ground transportation.

"I've told them, 'Whatever it takes, let's make it a major objective to get the trucks off the roads,'"

"Whatever it takes, let's make it a major objective to get the trucks off the roads,"

Gen. John Jumper
Air Force chief of staff

Up to now, the movement of U.S. war goods in Iraq has followed a kind of hub-and-spoke approach. Items have been flown directly from the United States or Europe to large airfields in Baghdad or Balad, about 50 miles north of Baghdad, then driven to bases elsewhere. Many stocks also have entered Iraq from Kuwait in the south or Turkey in the north.

This approach, however, has resulted in military convoys traversing menacing stretches north and west of Baghdad in what is known as the Sunni Triangle, where much of the violence against U.S. and Iraqi forces has been concentrated.

Under the new plan, the Air Force intends to expand direct delivery to airfields either outside or on the edges of the triangle, relying less on Baghdad and Balad as hub operations. Two weeks ago, long-distance cargo flights began direct service into Al Asad air base, which is nearer to the U.S. Marine force responsible for securing the area. The base is near the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi are located.



After battling the country's thin mountain air for more than three hours, Lt. Mike Baskin, of Santiago, Calif., wins Afghanistan's first marathon Sunday.

U.S. soldier wins first Afghanistan marathon

BY AMIR SHAH
The Associated Press

TIRIN KOT, Afghanistan — A U.S. soldier won Afghanistan's first marathon Sunday, battling the country's thin mountain air for more than three hours before crossing the finish line, where he promptly burst into tears remembering four comrades killed in recent fighting.

A total of 184 soldiers and civilians working for the U.S. military took part in the race at Firebase Ripley, a remote camp near Tirin Kot in central Uruzgan province, facing high altitude and a bumpy track as well as the threat of attack.

Plastic palm trees along the gun stores and bunkers near the course lightened the mood for the runners, who the Afghan National Olympic Committee said were competing in the first marathon in the war-ravaged country's history.

But the darker side of their mission resurfaced as the winner labored across the finish line after five long laps of the airstrip to cheers and handshakes in 3 hours, 12 minutes and 15 seconds — an impressive time for the conditions.

"I just thought about those four guys when I crossed, that they won't be going home with us, and it kind of hit me," said 1st Lt. Mike Baskin, a native of Santiago, Calif.

The race, which ended nearly three hours before 20,000 people began the Honolulu marathon, was the idea of members of the U.S. Army's 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, based at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, who didn't want to miss out on the competition.

The unit, part of the 25th Infantry Division, is operating in one of Afghanistan's most hostile areas. It suffered its latest casualties when a bomb ripped through a patrol near Deh Rawood, another town in Uruzgan, on Nov. 24,

killing two soldiers. A similar attack killed two other soldiers in October.

Helicopters flew troops in from across Afghanistan for the race.

Before the start, the assembled runners cheered as two military jets thundered low over the terrain, which lies 4,500 feet above sea level, and into the surrounding mountains.

The competitors, shorn of their guns and flak jackets, toiled around the circuit in shorts and T-shirts under cloudy skies and in temperatures of about 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Some of the course was gravel, but most was covered by fine dust that a rare overnight shower had turned to mud in patches. Its single hill was dubbed Diamond Head for the Honolulu landmark, an extinct volcano.

The first woman to finish was Spc. Jill Stevens, a 21-year-old from Utah, whose helicopter battalion is deployed at Bagram Air Base near Kabul.

"I love Afghanistan, and the views of the mountains during the race were great," she said after recording a time of 3:45:19 in what she said was her fifth marathon.

A large brown dog called Dunny, loping alongside a group of civilian contractors, also completed the regulation 26.2 miles.

A young Afghan working for the military, apparently the first to compete in such a race on Afghan soil, pulled up after one lap, complaining that regular soccer games were no way to prepare.

"These people are very fit, but this is not for an Afghan who only gets tea and bread for breakfast," Mohammed Anwar said, sitting on the ground and looking with concern at his knees. He was the only Afghan competitor.

All 153 finishers were presented with the same medals, certificates and black sponsored T-shirts as their Honolulu counterparts, and their times are to be recorded and listed in the same booklet.



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Popularity sinking USS Arizona memorial

Weight of larger-than-expected crowds causing visitors center to settle into ocean

BY JAYMES SONG
The Associated Press

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii — The USS Arizona Memorial's visitors center was designed to accommodate 750,000 people a year when it was built in 1980, but today it's jammed with crowds more than twice that big — and it's literally bursting at the seams.

Portions of the shoreline building and plaza commemorating the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor have settled as much as 30 inches and are still slowly sinking, and the concrete structure is cracking.

"Our office space is crammed, our visitor space is crammed, capacity is a significant issue on all fronts," said Douglas Lentz, the National Park Service superintendent in charge of the visitors center. "Then you've got the structural integrity of the building."

Crowds at the memorial have grown over the years as interest in Pearl Harbor has increased, fueled in part by Hollywood's sustained interest in World War II, including a blockbuster movie about the attack. The shock of the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001 drew comparisons to Pearl Harbor and sparked interest among a new generation.

A total of 2,390 people were killed in the U.S. Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack that drew the United States into World War II.

The Pearl Harbor Memorial Fund is working to raise \$34 million to replace the visitors center, the starting point for ferry rides across the harbor to the white memo-



U.S. NAVY/AP

The USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, is a symbol of the beginning and the end of World War II. The Pearl Harbor Memorial Fund is working to raise \$34 million to replace the visitors center, rear, the starting point for ferry rides to the memorial, front.

rial that straddles the sunken Arizona, which still contains the remains of 1,177 sailors.

The group — whose honorary chairmen include actor Tom Hanks and Sens. Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, and John McCain, R-Ariz. — wants to raise enough money to

break ground for a new center in three to five years. Mathew Sgan, the fund senior vice president, said the group is very pleased with its progress and is soliciting corporate donations.

The one-story, open-air visitors center building was constructed on fill material

that was dredged from Pearl Harbor decades earlier and was expected to settle 18 inches. Its architects even designed in the ability to raise the building using concrete shims.

But it already has been raised four times, causing cracks in the concrete walls that have exposed steel reinforcing rods to moisture.

Last year, engineers gave the building a life expectancy of just five to 10 more years.

Lentz said a new center will be built with lighter materials atop pilings that go deep into the ground to prevent sinking. There is also an option of building it on a floating foundation.

During the peak summer months, the center averages 4,500 visitors daily. Some of them have to wait for two hours to watch a 30-minute film — which includes U.S. and Japanese footage of the attack — and to be ferried out to the monument at the submerged battleship, which still leaks droplets of oil from its tanks.

The National Park Service estimated the memorial will attract 1.6 million visitors this year, up from 1.5 million in 2003.

Rep. Neil Abernethy, D-Hawaii, said he will push to make funding the project a "major focus" of the House Committee on Resources.

"When this was first put together, nobody had any idea that there was going to be this kind of ongoing response decades after decades," Abernethy said. "Not only were the intentions good at the beginning, but I think the planning for it was as much as was able to be conceived at the time."

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Archbishop of Westminster, presided at Saturday's memorial service at Westminster Cathedral for Margaret Hassan, a respected aid worker believed murdered in Iraq.



Mass honors missing aid worker

Margaret Hassan was abducted and believed murdered in Iraq

BY JILL LAWLESS
The Associated Press

LONDON — Family and friends gathered at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday to remember Margaret Hassan, a respected aid worker abducted and believed murdered in Iraq.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, leader of Britain's 5 million Roman Catholics, celebrated the requiem Mass for a "gentle, private, brave, loving and compassionate" woman he called a martyr.

"I use the word advisedly, be-

cause the word martyr means witness," he said. "Margaret witnessed, in both her life and her death, to the act of loving."

A portrait of Hassan, who was kidnapped in October and whose body has not been found, was placed by the altar instead of a coffin. More than 2,000 mourners joined in hymns and prayers for Irish-born Hassan, who also held British nationality and had lived in Iraq for 30 years.

In a statement, Hassan's sisters and brother said they had been "overwhelmed" by the messages

of sympathy received from around the world since a video purporting to show her death surfaced last month.

Hassan's Iraqi husband, Tahseen Ali Hassan, had been too ill to travel to Britain for the service, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported.

The Iraq director of aid agency CARE International, Hassan, 59, was abducted in Baghdad on Oct. 19 on her way to work. Her captors later issued videos showing her pleading for Prime Minister Tony Blair to withdraw troops from Iraq and calling for the release of female Iraqi prisoners.

Wedding ring more precious to injured Marine than finger

The Associated Press

VICTORVILLE, Calif. — When Marine Lance Cpl. David Battle learned he'd either have to sacrifice his ring finger or the wedding band he wore, he told doctors at a field hospital in Iraq to cut off the finger.

The 19-year-old former high school football star suffered a mangled left hand and serious wounds to his legs in a Nov. 13 fire fight in Fallujah, Battle, who is recovering at his parents' home in this desert city 80 miles northeast of Los Angeles, came under attack as he and fellow Marines entered a building. Eleven other Marines were wounded.

Doctors were preparing to cut off Battle's ring to save as much of his finger as they could. "But that would mean destroying my wedding ring," he said. "My wife is the strongest woman I know. She's basically running two people's lives since I've been gone. I don't think I

could ever repay her or show her how grateful — how much I love my wife, my soul mate."

With his approval, doctors severed his finger, but somehow in the chaos that followed, they lost his ring.

Although Battle was disappointed, his wife, Devon, said she was honored.

"I can't believe he did that," she said.

Marine's wife Devon said she was honored.

"At first I was mad when he told me, but then I realized how lucky I am to have him in my life."

The couple, who met in the eighth grade, were married in June, just two weeks before Battle left for Iraq. He hopes to eventually return to the Marines, and to replace his wedding ring, but that will have to wait until he recovers.

In the meanwhile, Battle's high school has planned a banquet in his honor next week.

"We need to make more David Battles," said Daniel Pierce, the school's assistant head coach. "He is one amazing guy."

"I can't believe he did that."

Devon Battle
Marine's wife

IN THE STATES

White House says Kerik never disclosed concerns

BY JIM VANDEHEI
AND MIKE ALLEN

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON White House officials Saturday blamed Bernard B. Kerik for repeatedly failing to disclose potential legal problems to administration lawyers vetting his nomination to be homeland security secretary, as President Bush prepared to quickly name a replacement and try to put the controversy over the former New York police commissioner's background behind him.

Kerik, who withdrew his own nomination Friday and apologized Saturday for embarrassing Bush, was asked numerous times by White House lawyers if he had employed an illegal immigrant or failed to pay taxes on domestic help, the sources said.

Kerik was told he would humiliate his family, himself and the president if he lied on either account, the officials said. He responded with firm denials. After digging deeper, however, Kerik said he discovered last week he might have a problem on both accounts, and withdrew.

In the vetting process, which

was conducted by the office of White House counsel Alberto R. Gonzales, Kerik also never mentioned that a New Jersey judge had issued a warrant for his arrest in 1998 over a civil dispute over unpaid bills, the sources said. The existence of the dispute was first reported by Newsweek on Friday night.



Kerik

It is unclear why White House lawyers could not uncover a warrant that Newsweek discovered after a few days of research, although some are blaming Bush's insistence on speed and secrecy for failing to catch this and other red flags in Kerik's background.

White House officials said they believed Kerik could have survived a controversy over the warrant in a civil matter.

Joseph Tacopina, Kerik's lawyer, said his client was not aware

of the warrant, which stemmed from a dispute over roughly \$5,000 in condominium fees.

Still, it was the nanny controversy, according to White House officials, that cost Kerik a high-profile job.

"This is my responsibility, this is my mistake," Kerik said outside his home in Franklin Lakes, N.J., in an interview broadcast by CNN on Saturday.

Bush plans to move quickly to name a replacement, although the few White House officials with knowledge of the short list would not speculate who it will be.

Other Republicans inside and out the White House said potential replacements include House Homeland Security adviser Frances Fragos Townsend, White House deputy chief of staff for operations Joseph Hagin; Asa Hutchinson, undersecretary for transportation and border security at Homeland Security and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Leavitt. An announcement is expected before Christmas.

Washington Post writer John Mintz and researcher Karl Eversz contributed to this report.

O'Keefe, head of NASA, applies for new job with LSU

The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe has applied for a new job, as chancellor of Louisiana State University's main campus in Baton Rouge, and his application has been put on a fast track.

He will meet Thursday with the committee looking for someone to fill the \$500,000-a-year job, search committee chairman Joel Toline said.

System president and acting chancellor William Jenkins "has had his eye on O'Keefe for quite some time," Charles Zewe, spokesman for the LSU Board of Supervisors, said Sunday.

The Houston Chronicle, citing sources it did not identify, said O'Keefe was poised to step down as NASA chief, and that an announcement regarding his future could come as early as Monday.

O'Keefe, 48, declined to comment to the Chronicle.

O'Keefe taught business administration and management

at Syracuse and Pennsylvania State universities before becoming secretary of the Navy and then NASA's chief. He is from New Orleans, about an hour's drive from Baton Rouge.

His tenure at NASA has included the investigation of the loss of the shuttle Columbia, which broke up during a descent from orbit.

He has recently been criticized by scientists for insisting that he will not risk astronauts to make repairs needed to keep the 14-year-old Hubble Space Telescope in operation.

O'Keefe is among a number of people being heavily recruited by LSU, but will be the first interviewed by the search committee, Toline said. He said the committee could vote Thursday on whether to recommend him to the Board of Supervisors.

The LSU position has been vacant since June, when Mark Emmert left for the University of Washington.

LSU's Baton Rouge campus has 31,500 of the system's 60,000 students.

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U.S. taps into IAEA director's phone calls

BY DAFNA LINZER

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration has dozens of intercepts of Mohamed ElBaradei's phone calls with Iranian diplomats and is scrutinizing them in search of ammunition to oust him as director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to three U.S. officials.

But the diplomatic offensive will not be easy. The administration has failed to come up with a



ElBaradei

push for his removal.

Although eavesdropping, even

candidate willing to oppose ElBaradei, who has run the agency since 1997, and there is disagreement among some senior officials over how hard to

on allies, is considered a well-worn tool of national security and diplomacy, the efforts against ElBaradei demonstrate the lengths some within the administration are willing to go to replace a top international diplomat who questioned U.S. intelligence on Iraq and is now taking a cautious approach on Iran.

The intercepted calls have not produced any evidence of nefarious conduct by ElBaradei, according to three officials who have read them.

But some within the administration believe they show ElBaradei lacks impartiality because he tried to help Iran navigate a diplomatic crisis over its nuclear programs. Others argue the transcripts demonstrate nothing more than standard diplomacy.

"Some people think he sounds way too soft on the Iranians, but that's about it," said one official with access to the intercepts.

In Vienna, where the IAEA is headquartered, officials said they were not surprised about the

eavesdropping.

"We've always assumed that this kind of thing goes on," said IAEA spokesman Mark Gwackowski.

The IAEA, often called the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency, coordinates nuclear safety around the world and monitors materials that could be diverted for weapons use.

It has played pivotal investigative roles in four major crises in recent years: Iran, Iraq, North Korea and the nuclear black market run by one of Pakistan's top scientists.

Bush pushes clean air plan

BY JOHN HEILPRIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush will make air pollution a top priority in Congress early next year, starting with "an aggressive push" to build support for his pollution-cutting plan, senior administration officials said Saturday.

At the same time, the administration will hold off until no later than March on a rule to cut pollution from power plants, the officials said.

The White House on Saturday told the Environmental Protection Agency of its game plan to allow time for Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., sponsor of Bush's "Clear Skies" initiative, to hold hearings on it in January.

"The president decided to make a strong push at the start of next year to complete his clean air and clean energy agenda," said EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt, who met with Bush to discuss the strategy earlier in the week. "The centerpiece will be 'Clear Skies' legislation and our 'Clean Air Interstate Rule.'" Leavitt added in an interview, "Both of those will provide a 70 percent reduction of nitrogen oxides and of sulfur dioxide. It would be a \$50 billion investment in clean air; it would be more tons of pollution out of the air."

The Clean Air Interstate Rule would call for reducing pollution according to a timetable and strategy that closely mirror the proposals the administration offered nearly three years ago in a Clear Skies initiative that stalled in Congress.

Environmentalists, however, say the Bush legislative proposal carried by Inhofe goes further than the rule, weakening parts of the Clean Air Act.

"The Bush administration is now staking its money on a bill in Congress that weakens and delays public health protections already provided under the current Clean Air Act," said Robert Bonner, spokesman for the U.S. customs officials said Sunday.

UAE teams with U.S. to secure cargo

BY JEANNINE AVERSA

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United Arab Emirates is the first country in the Middle East to participate in a U.S. program intended to safeguard sea cargo from terrorists, U.S. customs officials said Sunday.

For the first time, U.S. customs inspectors will be stationed at the port of Dubai to screen sea cargo headed for America, the officials said. It's part of a U.S. initiative begun in January 2000 to allay heightened concerns about sea cargo security after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The program seeks to prevent

cargo from being used by terrorists to smuggle themselves or weapons into the United States.

"The UAE has acknowledged the absolute importance of securing cargo against terrorists," said Robert Bonner, commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Adding the Dubai port to the program is seen as important because of the port's strategic position in Middle Eastern shipping and transport. More than half of the Sept. 11 hijackers flew directly from Dubai to the United States. The final stages for the attack, according to a report on the attacks. Also, some of the money used by

the terrorists was wired from Dubai banks.

Since the attacks, the UAE has taken steps to combat terrorism, including making high-profile arrests and passing an anti-money-laundering law.

U.S. customs authorities said a small team of U.S. inspectors will be to the port of Dubai, but they did not say when that would happen. Countries participating in the program also may station customs inspectors in the United States.

The customs agency said there are 22 ports, parties to the Container Security Initiative program, including some in Japan, Germany, Malaysia and Canada.

John Walker, director of clean air programs for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"The president wants to synchronize our strategy, and Senator Inhofe has asked that we allow his hearings to be concluded before we finalize CAIR (the interstate rule)," Leavitt said. "We believe that it improves the possibility of passage of Clear Skies legislation, and of course we prefer to have legislation."

The EPA will still send the interstate rule to the White House Office of Management and Budget on Monday for a 90-day review, and it will be made final by March unless Congress passes Bush's legislative plan by then, said Leavitt and James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

"We're looking forward to a strong, early and aggressive push that will guarantee massive pollution cuts from our old power plants," Connaughton said. "The legislation also allows us to have a national cap on pollution from power plants. The regulation only allows us to deal with the Eastern states where transported pollution is the issue."

The EPA will design and reduce long-disputed coal-burning power plants that EPA believes will "significantly contribute" to ozone and soot pollution in the East.

Leavitt and Connaughton said they believe legislation is superior to a regulatory approach, cutting down on the possibility of lawsuits that could delay the rules from going into effect from opponents who say they do too little or require too much.

"No regulation, no matter how well crafted, can come close to providing benefits that legislation can, both in terms of certainty for business and for the environment," said Dan Riedinger, a spokesman for the Edison Electric Institute, a trade group for utilities.



CHICAGO TRIBUNE/AP

Shirlee Allison, right, grandmother of Daniel Huffman, comforts Daniel's girlfriend, Becky Smith, in front of a collage of photos of Huffman in Rossview, Ill., on Friday.

Ill. man who sacrificed organ for grandmother dies from gunshot

The Associated Press

ROSSVILLE, Ill. — Daniel Huffman gave up football eight years ago when he donated a kidney to his grandmother so that she could live. Now his grandmother has lost her hero.

Huffman, 25, was found dead with a gunshot wound to the head Dec. 6 at his home in central Illinois. Authorities said there was no sign of foul play, and family members and friends are struggling with the possibility that he may have taken his own life.

"He was always so happy, so fun," Huffman's grandmother, Shirlee Allison, told the Chicago Tribune. "He put a lot of joy into everyone's life. He was always doing things for you, making you feel so special."

Huffman, a defensive tackle on Rossview's high school football team, decided to put away his football gear in 1996 for his grandmother, whose diabetes left her seriously ill and in need of a kidney transplant. She could have waited for a transplant, but Huffman, then 17, did some research and pressed doctors to allow him to be her donor.

He loved football, but the sacrifice meant he could no longer play contact sports. Huffman had the surgery the summer before his senior year, and word spread about the boy from Rossview, a small town about 130 miles southwest of Chicago.

Sports Illustrated did a story on him. He was honored with a Disney Wide World of Sports Spirit Award, and Florida State University gave him a scholarship even though Huffman couldn't play football again.

A television movie was even made about his donation: "Gift of Love: The Daniel Huffman Story," which starred Elden Henson as Daniel and Debbie Reynolds as his grandmother.

Huffman didn't think of his donation as an act of heroism.

"If you love someone and you can help them, any way you can, you're going to do it," he said in 1999.

Huffman spent three years at Florida State, working as an athletic trainer and later in the sports information office. He moved back to Illinois in 2000 to be a grandfather and to help care for his grandmother.

Huffman began working in various service jobs, and every weekend he would visit Allison, take her shopping and do her laundry. Friends say he recently talked of completing his college degree, and dreamed of someday teaching college English.

His best friend, Shaun York, discovered Huffman's body in the garage. "There is no answer," he said. "No one knows why. No one. I've racked my brain ever since. I'm his best friend, just loved him to death and I just don't know."

OPINION

In Kuwait, Rumsfeld didn't let his Guard down

In what other country in the world could the secretary of defense be called on the carpet by an enlisted soldier?

"Why do we soldiers have to dig through local landfills for pieces of scrap metal and compromised ballistic glass to up-arm our vehicles?" Spc. Thomas Wilson of the Tennessee Army National Guard asked Donald Rumsfeld, who

stopped to visit the troops in Kuwait (last week) on his way back from the inauguration of Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Wilson's question (which had been suggested by a reporter embedded with the unit) was greeted with shouts of approval and applause from the 2,300 mostly reserve soldiers who had come to hear Rumsfeld's speech.

Rumsfeld's response — that the Army is working as fast as it can to put armor on Humvees and larger trucks — is the truth, but is of cold comfort to soldiers who will be moving into Iraq in the next few weeks without it.

"You go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might

want or wish to have at a later time," a clearly uncomfortable Rumsfeld told Wilson.

Liberals delighted in Rumsfeld's discomfort. "We're used to hearing Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld answer questions about things that went wrong in Iraq by saying they went right," said The New York Times in an editorial.

"When he does that to reporters, it's annoying. When he does it to troops risking their lives in his failed test of bargain-basement warfare, it's outrageous."

Rumsfeld was better received by the troops than news accounts indicated, said a sergeant who was there.

"The mood in the hangar was much more of good will, with soldiers packing around the secretary as if he was a movie star to shake his hand or get a picture at the end," Sgt. Chris Missick said. "I wouldn't translate one very tough question into a grill session."

The Times implies negligence to Rumsfeld, but the reasons why the 27th Regimental Combat Team of the Tennessee Army National Guard will be moving into Iraq largely without armor for its soft-skinned vehicles long predated the current administration.

The primary reason is that the war in Iraq is very different from the kind of war the Army has been preparing for decades to fight. The war for which the Army had

planned was a war with the Soviets on the central German plain.

In that war there would be a front line, manned by tanks and armored fighting vehicles, and a rear area, in which trucks would bring beans, bullets and gas to the front-line units.

Before the Iraq war, there were no plans to armor logistics vehicles. But in this war, which the enemy wages largely by attacking convoys with remotely detonated bombs, it is the "rear area" troops who are in the greatest danger.

The Army is trying to adapt to the new reality as fast as it can. Automatic weapons have been mounted on trucks that never carried them before. Support troops are receiving infantry training, something only the Marines had done in the past. And the plants that manufacture kits to armor Humvees and trucks are working overtime to meet the need. But there is a regrettable, but inevitable, lapse of time between when an order is placed and when it can be filled.

The other problem is that in the Army, reserve soldiers have been stepchildren, subsisting, in large measure, on hand-me-downs. The newest equipment goes to the active forces first.

This was a sensible enough distribution of resources when the Reserve and National Guard were standby forces. It's not so sensible when 40 percent of all the troops



serving in Iraq today are reservists, a percentage that could rise to more than 50 percent after the troop rotation scheduled for this summer.

Our heavy reliance on the Guard and Reserve raises more pressing questions than who gets first dibs on new equipment. Future wars are more likely to resemble Iraq than the fight with the Soviets that

never came. There are a lot of things we need to fix with regard to the size, structure, equipping and employment of reserve forces. It's important to do this quickly. It's more important to do it right.

Jack Kelly is the national affairs writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the Toledo Ohio Blade. A former Marine and Green Beret, he was a deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force in the Reagan administration. His column appears weekly in Stars and Stripes.

Down the road, GI's must be allowed to shoot straight

Somewhere in Iraq today is a U.S. soldier, probably several, who will run for the Senate.

Dozens of American soldiers and Marines, who at this moment are wondering how they will vote, will be the day after tomorrow be introduced to a sniper's bullet or a roadside bomb, will one day live by the sword and one day die by the sword.

A future presidential candidate might have participated in harrowing door-to-door sweeps during the bloody fight for Fallujah last month.

Their courage and valor will be rightfully extolled. But will those who are putting their lives on the line in Iraq also earn the right to speak freely about it? Or will America's burgeoning obsession with PC — that's patriotically correct speech — stifle them and whose accounts and opinions of the war will matter most to history because they were acquired first-hand? Will Iraq war veterans be castigated tomorrow for criticizing the war they bravely fought today? I was riveted by the series "Six Days in Fallujah" by Knight Ridder reporter Tom Lasseter, who describes in breath-taking detail the experience of the Army 1st Infantry Division's Alpha Company, led by Capt. Sean Sims, as it prosecuted the battle to subdue the insurgent-controlled Sunni city.

"Sims' men would win the battle," Lasseter wrote, "yet no one would feel like celebrating. Killing the enemy, they learned, was sobering. More so was the loss of friends."

Sims himself did not survive the mission. Experiencing the fear, rage, courage,

heartbreak and camaraderie of war through a heart's eyes is just one step removed from the most personal accounts possible — those of the armed forces members themselves. In coming years, we will hear their accounts of Iraq, with all the drama, tragedy, humor, pathos, shock and triumph found in any war.

We also will hear their opinions about the war. Was it done right? Did we have to be there? Was it all worth it? Lasseter's series reminds us that no one can return from war unscarred. Our soldiers and Marines in Iraq will come home with tormented souls, desperate for validation that some greater purpose was served by the killing they had to do, the fear they had to bear, and the death and destruction they had to witness.

Will they be soothed by stateside pronouncements that they were fighting for America's freedom, fighting to defend our nation? Will elections in Iraq, whenever they should occur — reassure them that the

human carnage they experienced was both necessary and worthwhile? Will they be able to find a place of serenity within their souls where their wartime deeds will be vindicated by knowledge of a greater good that was served? Or, having personally tasted war — the pathetic frailty of the human body against the material of combat, the acid odor of expended explosives, the terror of children caught in the crossfire, the death, the death, the death — will they question the justification for it? This is where I ache, in advance, for our fighting men and women.

America's new affinity for patriotic correctness leaves precious little room to publicly question the predetermined components of patriotism — not even by veterans. Even they will be accused of disloyalty if they don't praise the leaders who insisted on war, or fail to agree that any war America fights is righteous and justified.

If a veteran of Operation Iraq Freedom says he believes the war was a waste, will he

be smeared by talk-show hosts who never shot at anything more dangerous than a golf green? If a future testifier before Congress tells of atrocities he witnessed in Iraq, will some well-paid political spin doctor later denounce him for turning on his fellow soldiers? Will a future candidate be Kertified by Fallujah Veterans for Truth, who will allege that he or she didn't bleed enough to have earned this or that medal? A generation from now, we'll be trampling on the memory of Iraq just as we are the history of Vietnam today — particularly if the current war turns out no better.

"Six Days in Fallujah" is a stark reminder that soldiers are not machines or comic-book figures. While they are honor-bound now to follow orders and leave the decision-making to others, that won't always be so. Their time to express their real stories and their true opinions will come. But will we want to hear them?

Robert Steinback is a Miami Herald columnist.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



IN THE WORLD



Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko and his wife, Kateryna, take questions at a Viennese clinic on Sunday in Austria, where doctors found out that his illness was caused by dioxin poisoning.

Yushchenko heading home after treatment in Austria

Calls for investigation of poisoning after new election

BY SUSANNA LOOF
The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko called for an investigation into who poisoned him with dioxin but said Sunday it should wait until after this month's presidential run-off, as he checked out of a Vienna clinic where the poisoning was diagnosed.

Doctors at the clinic called the poisoning potentially a "criminal case" but OK'd Yushchenko's return to the campaign trail.

The opposition leader is facing a new runoff vote on Dec. 26, ordered by Ukraine's Supreme

Court, which ruled that results that named Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich the winner in the initial vote on Nov. 21 were tainted by fraud.

Yushchenko fell ill Sept. 5 and had been treated at Vienna's elite Rudolfiner clinic twice before, but it was tests performed since he checked in Friday night that provided conclusive evidence that he had been poisoned, said hospital director Dr. Michael Zimpfer.

Wearing his trademark orange campaign scarf, Yushchenko flashed the peace sign out of the window of his car before driving off from the clinic. He was expected to fly back to Kiev later in the day.

Yushchenko has accused Ukrainian authorities of poisoning him, but told reporters he does not want to talk further about the allegation until after the runoff vote has been rerun on Dec. 26. "I don't want this factor to influence the election in some way — either as a plus or a minus," he said.

"This question will require a great deal of time and serious investigation. Let us do it after the election — today is not the moment."

Doctors said had the dose of dioxin been greater, it could have been fatal but that Yushchenko is now getting better and can return to the campaign trail.

hard-line elements within the Iranian regime may have developed working relationships with some senior al-Qaida officials who fled to Iran after the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. Iran has rejected the accusations.

"A few pro-al-Qaida Iranian nationals have been tried and convicted," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters.

Their number, he said, is less than "the

fingers on one's hand," he said, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

He did not give details, including when they were convicted, what sentences they had received or what sort of support they had provided Osama bin Laden's terror network.

Asefi said cases of foreign nationals in Iran with alleged links to al-Qaida are still under investigation and no trial dates have

Abbas apologizes for Palestinians' support of Saddam

BY DIANA ELIAS
The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas apologized to Kuwaitis on Sunday for the Palestinians' support of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, making a gesture many here have long demanded as he launched a tour to repair relations with Arab nations.

Asked by reporters about Palestinian support for Saddam's invasion, Abbas responded: "Yes, we apologize for what we have done."

The Kuwaiti government, in a reconciliation gesture to the new Palestinian leadership, had said Abbas was welcome and apologies were not important. Abbas is widely expected to be elected in January to succeed Yasser Arafat, who died in November and had stormy relations with many Arab leaders at one time or another.

However, Abbas' visit remained controversial in Kuwait.

A group of lawmakers said in a statement Saturday that they "absolutely reject the visit... before the PLO offers an official apology to the Kuwaiti people for the sin it committed against Kuwait."

It wasn't immediately clear if Abbas' brief remarks at the airport would satisfy the lawmakers. As PLO leader, Arafat supported Iraq in its 1990 invasion of this oil-rich country and opposed the subsequent U.S.-led Gulf War that liberated it. He never visited Kuwait afterward.

Some 450,000 Palestinians lived in Kuwait before the invasion.

Most were expelled or pres-



Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas answers questions from journalists after arriving at Kuwait International Airport on Sunday.

sured to leave after the country was liberated. Scores of Palestinians were convicted after the war for collaborating with Iraqi occupiers.

Kuwait, however, continued to provide financial aid to the Palestinian people through the Arab League and international organizations. Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah also said Saturday that the matter of the Palestinian leadership's support for Saddam "has been closed."

Asked then if Kuwait was going to demand an apology, Sheikh Sabah said, "Why are we talking about apologies?"

While serving as prime minister last year, Abbas condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in an interview with the state-owned Kuwait News Agency. He said the Palestinian leadership's position was "incorrect" and he understood why Kuwaitis were "angry and reproachful." He stopped short of apologizing.

Iran acknowledges convicting Iranians for al-Qaida ties

BY NASSER KARIMI
The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran acknowledged for the first time Sunday that it has convicted some Iranian nationals of supporting al-Qaida, saying the number was fewer than five.

The United States has accused Iran of harboring al-Qaida operatives, with some U.S. counterterrorism officials alleging

been set, IRNA reported.

Iran has said it would try al-Qaida operatives in Iranian custody whose nationalities were not clear and who were not claimed by any country. It also has said it would try any al-Qaida figures accused of committing crimes in Iran.

Iran maintains it is committed to fighting al-Qaida, and insists it has significantly contributed to the war on terror by arresting al-Qaida suspects.

Russian politicians, activists unite to oppose Putin's reforms

BY MARIA DANILOVA
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — More than 1,000 activists, politicians and prominent Kremlin critics gathered on Sunday — Russia's Constitution Day — to seek solidarity in fighting for democracy and human rights and oppose what they called President Vladimir Putin's

increasingly authoritarian rule.

The meeting made for an unusual alliance of liberals and communists who joined in urging broad public opposition to a series of Kremlin-sponsored political reforms that critics say will strengthen Putin's grip on the country at the expense of democracy.

"These are all very different people, but we have been united

by one common concern — the authorities' outright encroachment on our rights," respected rights activist said Lyudmila Alexeyeva said at the opening of the All-Russian Civil Congress for Democracy and Against Dictatorship.

"If we don't show solidarity in defending our rights, we will lose every single one of them," said Alexeyeva, head of the Moscow Hel-

sinki Group.

As the congress met, the Kremlin announced that Putin had signed one of his proposed reforms — a bill scrapping gubernatorial elections — into law. The other main proposal, which would end the election of direct election of national lawmakers, is expected to pass through the loyal parliament easily.

Putin proposed the changes in response to terrorist attacks in August and September that killed more than 450 people. Critics warn that they could violate Russia's constitution, which was adopted in 1993 under Putin's predecessor Boris Yeltsin and was considered one of the main democratic achievements of his troubled rule.

Philippine market blast kills 15

BY JIM GOMEZ

The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A powerful explosion ripped through an outdoor market packed with Christmas shoppers in the southern Philippines on Sunday, killing at least 15 people and injuring 58 others, the military said.

A homemade bomb or a grenade concealed in a box went off in the market's meat section in General Santos city. Officials immediately stepped up security,

fearing more attacks in the port city 620 miles south of Manila.

"This is a terrorist attack by any measure," Philippine Sen. Richard Gordon, who heads the Philippine Red Cross, told ABS-CBN television. He criticized the military and police for failing to prevent the attack despite what he said was intelligence information of an imminent terror strike in the city.

"I'm getting reports from some of our people there that they knew there was a plan to pull this off but still it happened," Gordon

said. "They need to bolster their spying and their surveillance of places that should be under guard."

Army Col. Medardo Geslani, who heads a regional anti-terrorism force, said his group claimed responsibility and it was not yet clear if terrorist groups were involved. "It was most possibly caused by an improvised explosive device," Geslani said.

Islamic and communist rebels operate in provinces near General Santos, and despite a crack-

down by the military and police, Muslim militants are believed to still have a presence in the predominantly Christian city of 500,000.

Police investigator Capt. Maximiliano Sebastian said three people were instantly killed by Sunday afternoon's bomb blast and other victims died in hospitals.

"The market was packed with people because there were Christmas flea market stalls there, and the explosion was powerful," Sebastian told The Associated Press by telephone.

Japanese: Sanctions can hurt N. Korea

BY AUDREY MCAVOY

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese sanctions on North Korea would have a severe impact on the reclusive communist regime, and could ultimately topple dictator Kim Jong Il if China joined in pressuring Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program, a key ruling party official said Sunday.

Shinzo Abe said Kim could avoid being deposed by following the example of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, who a year ago said his country would dismantle its programs for weapons of mass destruction and allow U.N., American and British inspectors to visit the facilities.

"If he doesn't make that choice, then there could be regime change. He must realize this," Abe said on a TV Asahi debate program.

Abe, the acting secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic Party, did not elaborate on how Kim might be removed from power.

He argued, however, that economic sanctions favored by most Japanese would deal a serious blow to the impoverished communist state.

Pressure is mounting on Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to ban North Korean ships from Japanese ports, prohibit cash remittances to the communist state or impose other sanctions in an attempt to force Pyongyang to release information on Japanese kidnapped by Pyongyang in the 1970s and 1980s.

On Friday, an LDP group and a lower house committee passed separate resolutions calling for a freeze in humanitarian aid to North Korea and a threat of economic sanctions if progress is not made.

Man-made assets OK for Chinese beauties

BY AUDRA ANG

The Associated Press

BEIJING — Nineteen finalists in China's first beauty pageant for women who have had plastic surgery took to the stage Sunday in a parade of glittering gowns and plunging necklines.

The contestants, heavily made up with hair expertly teased, waved and posed as they were presented to reporters before a week of preparations for the Dec. 18 final.

The competition and its novel pitch is another sign of China's increasing fixation with beauty as the country grows more prosperous and its people more conscious about looking good at any cost.

In the larger cities, cosmetic surgery has become the norm as more women — and some men — go under the knife to improve their looks.

"Before, I couldn't imagine that was possible to have places where the old could become young and the ugly could become beautiful," said Liu Yulan, who at 62, is the oldest contestant.

She has had a face lift and surgery on her eyelids.

"I'm not here for a prize," said Liu, who was wearing a form-fitting carmine Mandarin-collar dress with silver beading. "I want to show my attitude of my heart, my self-confidence."

The idea for the competition took shape shortly after an 18-year-old

woman was disqualified from a Chinese beauty pageant earlier this year because she had had plastic surgery. She sued unsuccessfully for emotional damages.

Han Wei, one of the organizers, said there had been more than 90 applicants from other countries including the United States and Japan, but none were chosen because they weren't serious about the contest or had language or scheduling problems.

"This contest shows women's strong pursuit of beauty," she said. "We would like to use it to unveil the mystery of man-made beauty and let society have a complete understanding of every aspect."

Other individual prizes will also be awarded for best figure and best stage demeanor.

Liu Xiaojing, a 21-year-old finalist from the northeastern city of Harbin, was a man three years ago but doesn't feel that it makes a difference to her chances in the competition.

"Becoming beautiful is the wish of everyone," said Liu, who was wearing a strapless turquoise dress. "I am now legally a woman and this contest is my first formal step toward womanhood."

Liu, who hadn't told organizers that she was a transsexual because no one had asked, revealed that she used to be a man on Sunday in front of reporters. Han said Liu's case was being discussed and no decision had been made on whether she still qualified as a contestant.



Contestants for China's first beauty contest for women who have had plastic surgery pose for photographers Sunday during a Beijing press conference. Nineteen contestants from around China will take part in the final contest Dec. 18.

**LOOK FOR
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SpongeBob melts

CT NORWICH — The mystery of the disappearance of at least one 6-foot inflatable SpongeBob SquarePants has been solved.

It was not thievery at the Norwich Burger King. It was the heat.

Police said the case was solved after they learned that a restaurant maintenance crew discarded a deflated SpongeBob after it melted into the rooftop heating system air ducts.

SpongeBob had been a fixture on the roof for nearly a month before disappearing Nov. 30. The maintenance crew did not tell management of the meltdown and subsequent cleanup.

10 years for bank robber

CO DENVER — A woman accused of helping her boyfriend rob banks across the West like a modern-day Bonnie and Clyde was sentenced to 10 years in prison and ordered to repay \$231,000.

Nova Guthrie, 31, and her boyfriend, Craig Pritchett, were accused in a string of holdups in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Texas and New Mexico between 1997 and 1999. At one time they were on the FBI's most-wanted list.

Prosecutors said the pair netted about \$500,000 and used it to visit ski resorts and beaches around the world. They were captured in 2003 in South Africa, where they were living law-abiding lives under assumed names.

Pritchett, 43, was recently sentenced to 22½ years in prison and was also ordered to repay \$246,406.

Guthrie pleaded guilty last year to three robberies in a deal that called for a sentence of nine to 11 years.

Fisherman death

NC MOREHEAD CITY — A fisherman discovered an empty boat cruising off the North Carolina coast with its harpoon line in the water. When he reeled in the line, he found a live bluefin tuna speared on the end — and the captain's entangled body.

The captain, Bruce Bartlett of South Plainfield, N.J., apparently harpooned the fish, then got his left leg caught in the 200-foot line. Coast Guard officials said. When the tuna swam away, Bartlett was pulled into the ocean off Morehead City and drowned.

Bartlett was a commercial fisherman who traveled up and down the coast, Guard officials said. He was alone in the 35-foot boat, named Flat Calm, fighting a fish that can weigh from 200 to 500 pounds.

Naked nuisance

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A man wandered naked through residential streets and fought with police before being bitten by a police dog and subdued with the use of a Taser gun.

The man was taken to Hennepin County Medical Center, having been bitten by the dog in the groin area, police Lt. Medorita Arradondo said. He was reported in serious condition.

Neighbors said the man pounded on the doors of their homes,



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

sometimes swearing, and rang doorbells.

Libby Pomroy said she heard her dog barking in the back yard. "I looked out the kitchen window and there was this naked man chasing her around the yard," Pomroy said.

Expanding the state

NH CONCORD — Legislators say they will file bills next year to expand the state. One proposal would declare the towns of Kittery and Berwick, Maine, part of New Hampshire. The two states have fought over the border for decades in a dispute over who owns the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Another bill would welcome Killington, Vt., whose voters approved a plan to join New Hampshire because of a tax dispute with Vermont. The Vermont and Maine legislatures also would have to approve the proposals. Their approval isn't seen as likely.

Town in the hole

CA LOS ANGELES — Bankers have given an 11th-hour reprieve to the debt-ridden Los Angeles suburb of Gardena, postponing a deadline this month tied to more than \$26 million in debt, officials said.

The decision forestalls the possibility that the working-class city could be pushed into immediate default or bankruptcy. Gardena does not have the money to pay the

debt, but a new deadline of May 31 allows the city to continue negotiating with two banks.

About \$20 million of Gardena's debt stems from its decision in 1993 to borrow money to finance an insurance company that flopped.

The city also owes more than \$6 million from a failed home-loan program.

Terauchi and other officials said the city of 60,000 people has few options to raise cash to cover the debts that nearly equal Gardena's annual general fund budget.

Diversifying a district

IL CHICAGO — A federal judge has ruled that the Chicago Board of Education must find seats in substantially white schools for black and Latino students by mid-December. U.S. District Judge Charles Kocoras' ruling was in response to Justice Department claims that the nation's third-largest school district did not offer any racial transfers this year to improve integration.

Ethical rules approved

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Following a raft of scandals, the governing body of the state's most populous county has voted to approve a package of ethics reforms. The Salt Lake County Council's new rules scrap cap allowances, prohibit contractors from making political donations to county candidates, cap campaign contributions and require county lobbyists to get registered.

Court finds for bankers

FL PANAMA CITY — An appellate court upheld a lawsuit verdict that cleared two bankers of responsibility for the death of a frail millionaire. Emily Bentley accused Detroit-based Comerica Bank and two of its officers in her husband's death. She said the bankers came to the couple's home and forced her 65-year-old husband to walk in near-100-degree heat to prove he was sick. He had sought funds for medical expenses from trust accounts the bank managed. He died a few days after the visit.

Hawk evicted

NY NEW YORK — Pale Male the city hawk was evicted from his nest, and the flap has already begun.

So said aggrieved bird-watchers and neighbors after workmen raised a scaffold to the top of a Manhattan apartment and ripped out the famous red-tailed hawk's nest.

The act appeared to end an urban drama that has fascinated bird-watchers over the past nine years, as Pale Male and a succession of mates raised 25 chicks — the last trio of fledglings last June — on the narrow 12th floor ledge over Fifth Avenue.

The hawks also achieved a measure of world fame, through television specials and a book, "Red-Tails in Love."

Pale Male, so named for his whitish plumage, and his mate, Lola, were nowhere to be seen as the nest was removed, nor were any of their latest offspring.



A little to the left ... Workmen stand atop the Durham School of the Arts to guide the new cupola into position in North Carolina.



Yum, raw fish! Snappy, a one-winged pelican, gets a fish lunch from Allison Campbell in her Miles City, Mont., back yard while waiting for a medical OK to be flown to a new home in Florida. Campbell had just taken Snappy to East Main Animal Clinic in Miles City for a checkup and bath.



Working reflections

Working in a cherry picker, Chester Powers checks a parking lot light for an electrical short in the lighting system at the Church of the Nazarene in Clovis, N.M.



Cashing in on recycling

PA PHILADELPHIA — City officials will start a pilot program next month in which people can earn restaurant and store coupons by recycling their trash. About 6,000 households in the Chestnut Hill and East Oak Lane neighborhoods will get recycling containers stamped with bar codes. Specially equipped trucks will read the code and weigh the recyclables. Residents will earn \$5 in coupons for every 10 pounds of recycling, up to a maximum of \$25 a month.

Controversial return

CA SACRAMENTO — Outraged citizens barraged county officials with dozens of calls and e-mails, protesting the return to duty of a sheriff's deputy who was fired after jurors convicted him of trespassing while in uniform into the home of a woman he hoped to pursue romantically.

"You should be tarred and feathered!" Fran Harrison wrote to the five members of the Sacramento County Civil Service Commission, which voted to reinstate Timothy James Durel as a deputy.

The controversial decision — combined with the recent reinstatements of four other fired officers — is creating a political whirlwind in the county, as sheriff's officials blame appointed commissioners and county leaders distance themselves from the fray.

Wrong place to plant pot

PA DOYLESTOWN — Police said Ryan M. Steel picked a pretty bad place to grow dozens of large marijuana plants — on land owned by a retired police chief.

Steel, 26, of Upper Makefield Township, was charged with manufacturing a controlled substance, criminal trespass and agricultural vandalism. Authorities said he grew the plants on land owned by Robert Bell, the retired police chief of Bucks County's Springfield Township.

It was unclear why Bell's land was chosen to grow the plants.

Police pulled 29 6- to 10-foot-tall plants from Bell's property in September and arrested Steel on Dec. 2. Officials did not say how they concluded Steel was the one who planted the crops.

Credit not accepted

GA ATLANTA — Georgia Tech will no longer allow students to pay tuition by credit card, a change the school says will save it \$1 million a year. Up to 40 percent of the university's 16,500 students used a credit card to pay for at least some of their expenses this year, officials said. As of Dec. 20, students will have to pay for their tuition, housing or meal plans with cash or a check. The school said it paid more than \$1 million last year in credit card service charges, at a time when the institute has laid off workers and scaled back courses because of state budget cuts.

Hounds rescued

UT CEDAR CITY — Some search-and-rescue workers became dogs' best friends with an unusual rescue.

A member of the Kane County rescue team rappelled steep cliffs

near the east entrance of Zion National Park to save four hounds that chased a mountain lion over a cliff.

Jeff Allen of Kanab was guiding a client on a mountain-lion hunt this week when his five dogs and the big cat went over a cliff and landed 30 feet below on an icy ledge, said David Owens, director of the county's emergency services.

Allen phoned a sheriff's deputy, who got permission from the sheriff to rescue the strand dogs.

The fifth dog was rescued in a subsequent operation.

More grade information

MI ANN ARBOR — The liberal arts faculty at the University of Michigan voted to include detailed information on transcripts that will provide certain information for students' grades. It's an effort to track and contain grade inflation. For classes with 10 or more students, the median grade and the number of students in the class will be added next to a student's individual grade.

No eavesdropping allowed

WA SEATTLE — Striking a blow for rebellious teenagers, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that state law prohibits parents from eavesdropping on a child's phone conversations.

The case reached the high court because of a purse-snatching. A 17-year-old boy was convicted of the robbery, in part on testimony from his girlfriend's mother, who overheard him discussing the crime on the phone with her daughter.

The daughter had taken a cordless phone into her bedroom and closed the door. In another room, her mother pressed the speakerphone button on an extension, listened in and took notes.

The court ruled that the daughter and her boyfriend had a reasonable expectation of privacy on the phone.

Whooping cough on rise

KS TOPEKA — State health officials say the number of cases of whooping cough, a childhood illness that can be fatal, has risen dramatically this year. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has recorded 148 cases, an increase from 23 in 2003 and 38 in 2002.

Missing art found

MO ST. LOUIS — Some pieces of a missing multimillion-dollar art collection that includes works by Pablo Picasso and Willem de Kooning have been recovered, authorities said.

FBI special agent Peter Krusing said that investigators recovered some paintings, prints and sculptures stolen from a storage facility in the St. Louis suburb of Bridgeton. But over half of the more than 100 works remain missing.

The works had been placed in storage there by an out-of-state owner, whom officials declined to identify. The works had been appraised of more than \$2 million in 1991, the FBI said.

The theft was reported Oct. 13 after an inventory showed the items were missing, officials said.

Stories and photos from wire services

What will they think of next?

Nico Tutenhoofd gets some exercise roller skiing around city blocks in Chagrin Falls, Ohio.



Singing tree

Steve Halvorson, foreground left, and Kim Elliott, right, rehearse along with other singers for the 25th annual Living Christmas Tree musical performance at the First Baptist Church in Roswell, N.M.



Shower of lights

As the temperature made a gradual climb into the 60s, the rain kept coming down in Greensboro, N.C., during the mid-morning and afternoon hours, as Vickie Curtis walks down Elm Street amid trees strung with lights.

FACES

Mike Tyson arrested outside club

Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson was arrested on suspicion of misdemeanor criminal damage for allegedly jumping on the hood of a car outside a nightclub, police said.

Tyson, who moved to Scottsdale, Ariz., early this year, appeared with lawyers at the city's police station Tuesday afternoon and was released after being given a citation.

Scottsdale police Detective Sam Bailey said Wednesday that Tyson likely will make an initial court appearance within 10 days.

Tyson allegedly dented the hood of a car when he jumped on it as its driver was leaving the club around 1 a.m. on Nov. 27.

Asaf Alkaidi, 22, told police he had stopped his car to let Tyson cross the street when the boxer started screaming and yelling and then jumped on the hood of the car on his hands and knees and began to pound on it.

New York notables honor Koch

A who's who in New York politics turned out to celebrate former Mayor Ed Koch's 90th birthday at a party at Gracie Mansion.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer, and Gov. George Pataki all spoke at Thursday night's bash, at which Bloomberg announced that a gift had been given to establish the Edward I. Koch scholarships at City College, Koch's alma mater.

"Simply put, Ed was not only a great mayor and a great source of advice and support to other mayors, he happens to be one of the greatest leaders and politicians in the history of our city," Bloomberg said.

Magazine to appeal costly ruling

Celebrity magazine Hello! plans to appeal a court ruling ordering it to pay more than \$1.9 million to a rival for printing unauthorized photos of Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones, a lawyer for the magazine said.

Last year, a judge at the High Court in London ruled that Hello! had breached the Hollywood couple's commercial confidentiality by publishing snatched photos of their November 2000 wedding. Douglas and Zeta-Jones had signed an exclusive deal with rival magazine OK! for rights to pictures of the nuptials at New York's Plaza Hotel.

Judge John Lindsay awarded the couple token damages of \$28,000, but said OK! was owed more than \$1.9 million for commercial damage to its expected exclusive coverage.

Both sides were given permission to appeal aspects of the judgment.



Douglas and Zeta-Jones

Willis offers land donation for airport

Bruce Willis stole the show at the Friedman Airport Authority meeting last week, offering to donate a portion of land he owns at the eastern end of Camas County, Idaho, to help build a new airport.

Willis' property along Highway 20 is part of one of three sites being considered. The offer was unexpected, airport authority Chairwoman Mary Ann Mox said.

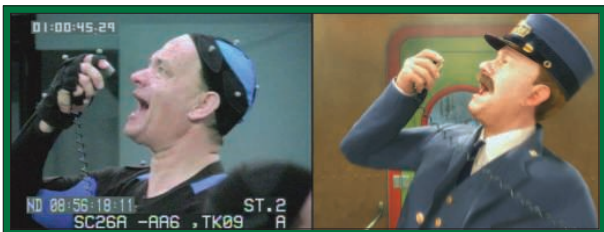
The actor, whose screen credits include the "Die Hard" movies, "Pulp Fiction" and "The Sixth Sense," pitched his plan at a meeting Tuesday.

Mox said the room erupted in applause when Willis announced his intended donation, saying he was concerned with the safety conditions at the present airport.

"Bruce is a fabulously decent man — always very concerned about what's good for his community,"

Mox said. Willis owns part of the proposed site on the Camas Prairie, she said, though it wasn't clear exactly what he was offering.

Photos and stories from The Associated Press



Oscar-winning actor Tom Hanks, left, wears digital sensors on his head, hands and face as he performs a scene from "The Polar Express." Hanks' performance was then digitally rendered, right, to create one of his characters in the film.

Hanks takes a ride on 'Polar Express'

BY ANTHONY BREZNICK

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES
Tom Hanks used experimental technology to morph into a little boy, a train conductor, a hobo and Santa Claus for the adventure "The Polar Express."

This is how he was able to co-star with himself. The two-time Oscar-winner climbed into something like a black wetsuit lined with neon-blue streaks and a tight cap, and had hundreds of glistening white specks on his face. Computers recorded his movements and expressions, which were then transposed onto his various characters. With just a few more technological evolutions, "The Polar Express" may change the way people consider performance — actors would no longer be constrained by their own bodies.

Harrison Ford could be 80 and still playing a young "Indiana Jones." Sean Connery could play himself circa "Dr. No" in a new James Bond movie. Jack Nicholson could star as a 16-year-old, and Haley Joel Osment could play a geriatric.

Actors could swap and trade digital bodies: Tom Cruise could perform as Humphrey Bogart; Julia Roberts could try Rita Hayworth.

Or Eddie Murphy could easily play every character in a film — old, young, heavy, skinny, white, black, male, female — without any makeup or prosthetics.

"The Polar Express" director Robert Zemeckis, renowned for using state-of-the-art effects in his films such as the "Back to the Future" trilogy, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" and "Cast Away," said the breakthrough came about four years ago when Hanks sent him a copy of the slim, beloved 1985 children's book by illustrator Chris Van Allsburg.

The actor wanted to see if it could be made into a film. "I looked at these beautiful paintings and said, 'It's great but how are we going to do a movie like this?'" Zemeckis said.

"We thought about it, and thought about it and realized the emotion of the book was in the paintings. The story was really interesting but the paintings are what made that book so popular."

"We never thought it was appropriate for 'The Polar Express' to be an animated cartoon," Zemeckis added. "And to do it live-action would not be absolutely true to the emotion of the book. So we came up with this process that we really liked. It's digitally rendered, but there's no animation."

By that method, he said, they were able to create the soft pastel imagery of Van Allsburg's book through computer technology but the characters were not manipulated by ani-

maters to coincide with the actors' voices, as in such films as "The Incredibles" and "Shrek."

Hanks was familiar with traditional computer animation from playing Woody the cowboy in the "Toy Story" movies; he recorded lines, then left the body to animators.

"This is not one of those movies," Hanks said. "Everything you see (in 'The Polar Express') performed by a human being was performed by a human being on a soundstage."

The sensors on Hanks' suit and face were recorded as he moved around a mostly vacant room, and those gestures and expressions were layered with a digital skin that moved in relation to the actor.

"There's no reason to do a movie like 'Mystic River' this way," Zemeckis said, referring to last year's effects-free, gritty drama that won Oscars for Sean Penn and Tim Robbins. "But there is the chance now to let imagination run wild."

Motion capture computerization became familiar to most moviegoers when actor Andy Serkis controlled the movements of Gollum in "The Lord of the Rings," and it's a common technique used on sports figures such as Tiger Woods to animate their own moves in video games.

But the subtleties of human expression are so delicate that most eye, mouth and face movements traditionally have been left to animators, who frequently work from tapes of the actors.

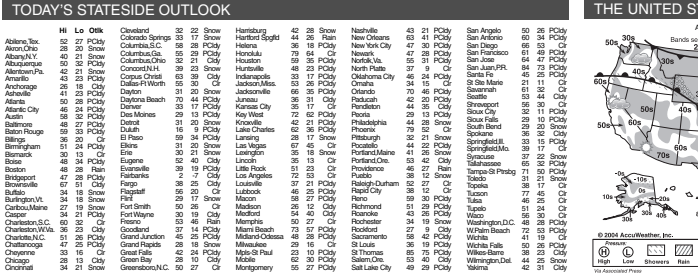
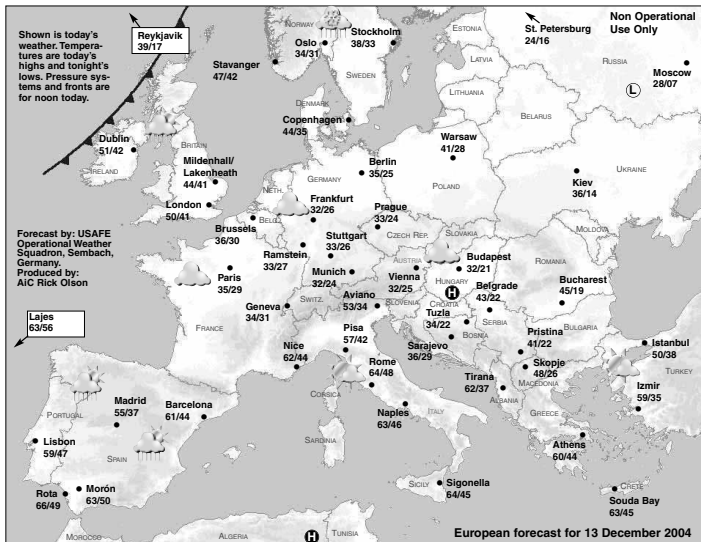
"The Polar Express" pushed the technology into a new dimension by mapping the areas of Hanks' face with 152 sensors, so his instinctual movements controlled the faces of his characters.

"Believe it or not, the information would extend to a computer so you could tell the difference between a frown and a smile, eyes wide open, essentially every nuance that the human face can go through," Hanks said. Occasionally one of the BB-sized sensors would fall off, Hanks said, which the computers rendered as if Santa's cheek or eyebrow suddenly stretching down to touch the floor.

Computer animators did come into the scene, however, to "take what we did and turn it into a little boy outside with snow falling down," Hanks said. Three other adults play children in the movie — Hanks' "Bosom Buddies" co-star Peter Onorati, "The Matrix Reloaded" actress Nona Gaye and Eddie Deezen, the nerdy character actor who is best known as Eugene in "Grease."

"It was ridiculous amounts of fun," Hanks said. "You just kind of have to forget an awful lot of stuff that you know as an adult and take part, literally, in the recess atmosphere."

"The visual aspect of movies is beyond imagination," he said, "but the sound is pretty much the same as in (Al) Jolson's time."



EUROPEAN FORECAST

BeneLux: Mostly cloudy with fog. Highs in the upper 30s to low 40s. Tuesday lows in the lower 30s.

Britain, Ireland: Partly cloudy to mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers in the morning and fog. Highs in the low to mid 50s. Tuesday lows in the lower 40s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Cloudy with freezing fog. Highs in the lower to mid 30s. Tuesday lows in the lower 20s.

France: Cloudy with fog. Highs in the mid 40s to low 60s. Tuesday lows in the lower 20s to lower 40s.

Northern Germany: Cloudy with fog. Highs in the lower 30s. Tuesday lows in the mid 20s.

Southern Germany: Cloudy with fog. Highs in the lower 30s. Tuesday lows in the mid 20s.

Hungary: Cloudy with fog. Highs in the lower to mid 30s. Tuesday lows in the lower 20s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to upper 40s. Tuesday lows in the mid 20s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the upper 50s to lower 60s. Tuesday lows in the mid 40s.

Kosovo: Cloudy with freezing fog. Highs in the lower 20s. Tuesday lows in the lower 20s.

Norway: Partly cloudy to mostly cloudy with isolated rain/snow showers. Highs in the mid 30s to upper 40s. Tuesday lows in the lower 30s to lower 40s.

Portugal, Spain: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the mid 50s to lower 60s. Tuesday lows in the upper 30s to upper 40s.

Turkey: Partly cloudy. Highs in the 50s. Tuesday lows in the mid 30s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at: <https://www.sembach.af.mil> <http://www.public.sembach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON



Scheduled to

ETS or PCS?

Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS & STRIPES

Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

Venus and Saturn work together to make sure the lessons that guide our relationships are ones we learn well. During the last week of Mercury's retrograde, we're more conscious of not repeating mistakes — and if we forget, an interfering friend nearby is sure to remind us. "Hey, didn't you do that last time? And didn't it turn out badly?"

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 13). You've come a long way, and this is your year to celebrate! January features buying and selling your way into a better financial spot. Involvement in charity or the arts will be your lucky ticket to love. February features more responsibility, so make a huge effort to break away from tired patterns — vacation in March. Love signs are Pisces and Taurus. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 50, 6, 11 and 43.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You haven't always been paid correctly for your effort. But at least now you have the benefit of 1,000 practice runs. You approach your work with precision and artistry, and it's impressive to exactly the person you want to please.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're enriched by a greater appreciation for the familiar. Maybe wild beauty isn't what defines your neighborhood, but there's a certain charm there, and you're comfortable. Positive thoughts of home keep you in fine health.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). It's the little interactions that have you feeling content, if not a tad smug. Your superior social skills work to smooth over hassles and get you free upgrades. Customer-service agents figure into the equation.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). A ragged relationship is shaping up bit by bit. Transformation is too much to expect, but growth, even rapid growth, is not so far-fetched. Put in the effort, and you won't be disappointed.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). In family matters, you state exactly what's going to happen before it does. Granted, you know your loved

ones quite well and can therefore operate like an expert oddsmaker. Still, your handle on the situation protects all involved.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're impulsive now, — it's hard to know when you're onto something good or just going with the playful mood of the moment. Go for a quantity of ideas instead of worrying yet about which one is actually going to work.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Some of your cohorts will sink to petty and self-serving activities, so it's important that you stay firmly grounded in your values.

There's more at stake than the happiness of people who are already in power. Fair is fair.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Love relationships benefit from a dose of ambitious idealism. So what if it doesn't exactly happen the way you dreamed it would — it's more important that you have joint aspirations. Be frivolous and fanciful!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Swiftly respond when duty calls! Your self-confidence soars when you know that you don't have to think about doing the right thing anymore — it's an automatic response. You'll put all opponents on the defensive.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's hard to be honest with friends, especially the sensitive ones — history proves they can't take the smallest dose of their own medicine. Timing makes all the difference. Speak your truth in the moment it's all going down.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Significant others may say one thing and do another, but these are minor grievances, and there's no use fighting over it. Take the high road. You know you're right, so it is really important that others acknowledge it, too?

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You've got that delicious excited edge, like you're not sure whether you can really pull something off. Though you'd probably perform better without the nerves, it wouldn't be as exhilarating. Love where you are!

Creators: Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



Better or Worse



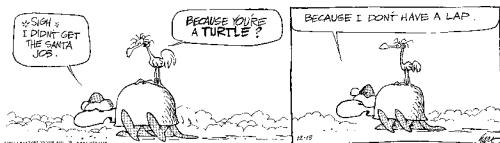
Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



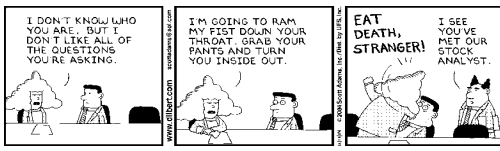
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



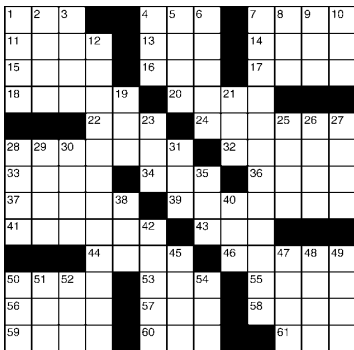
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Earn an Obie, maybe
- 4 Center
- 7 Harvest
- 11 Boutique
- 13 Judge Lance
- 14 Apiece
- 15 Senate employee
- 16 — de deux
- 17 Fed lines to
- 18 Walk of Fame array
- 20 Vagrant
- 22 Long lunch?
- 24 Actress Mason
- 28 Palace furniture
- 32 Extemporize
- 33 Ballgame postponer
- 34 Pantheon member
- 36 Aching
- 37 1991 Stallone movie
- 39 Deck with diamonds
- 41 Pod group
- 44 Witticism
- 44 Tourney situations
- 46 Allen or Frome
- 50 Tarzan's missus
- 53 Energy
- 55 Facility
- 56 Singer Tori
- 57 JFK info
- 58 Contribute one
- 59 Lightbulb unit
- 60 Flushed
- 61 Terrier dog

Down

- 1 Venomous vipers
- 2 Confab
- 3 Forum fashion
- 4 With it
- 5 Beehive State
- 6 Seat of emotions
- 7 Fast athlete, often
- 8 Perfume-label word
- 10 Third degree?
- 12 Athlete's stat
- 19 Get some rays
- 21 Ovine remark
- 23 Plead
- 25 Adagio
- 26 Take on
- 27 First victim
- 28 Believe, old-style
- 29 — browns
- 30 Costa follower
- 31 Get all weepy
- 35 Rep. rival
- 38 Monterrey monarch
- 40 1970 Peter Boyle movie
- 42 Cut
- 45 Location
- 47 Amount stolen
- 48 On the briny
- 49 Dweeb
- 50 Uppercut target
- 51 Dr.'s org.
- 52 'What I just said was in jest'
- 54 Alfred E. Neuman's magazine

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-13

CRYPTOQUIP

DEH KFUO MAFM DEH
UIJLIMLO SFNNEIK, SHM
U AFJL ME SLNULJL DEH'QL

CHNN E.C. AEM FUQ.
Saturday's Cryptquip: WHEN THAT TRAFFIC
COP HALTED THE SNOWMAN, ONE MIGHT SAY
FROSTY WAS STOPPED COLD.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: N equals L

Split couple complicate invites

Dear Abby: I'm throwing a holiday party. About six weeks ago, my friend "Shirley" asked me the party and that I was inviting her ex-fiance, "Tom." She replied that if Tom would be there, she would not.

I sent invitations to both of them. Tom RSVP'd that he and his new girlfriend (the one she came between him and Shirley) would attend. I then informed Shirley that "you know who" was coming. She is now very upset with me and accuses me of choosing him over her. She's questioning my friendship and says I'm purposely tormenting her.

I understand Shirley is upset. But don't you agree that she needs to understand my position? My husband is close friends with Tom, and while him to attend. Shirley knew I was inviting him. Now, less than a week before party time, she has called me five times to cry and make me feel bad. I'm afraid no one will enjoy

anything if they're in the same room.

— **Tom in Two in South Carolina**

Dear Tom in Two: Shirley should not dictate who's to be invited to and/or excluded from your party. Remind her what she said when you first told her that

both she and her ex would be invited. Your husband has a right to include anyone he wishes. Tell Shirley that you'd love to have her there, but if it's too painful for her to see Tom and his new love interest, you'll invite her to another soiree. The choice is hers.

Dear Abby: I was recently engaged to "Danny," the man of my dreams. He's everything I have prayed for all my life.

The problem is his mother. She constantly barges into our relationship. She was even there when he proposed to me — so close I could hear her crying. Because Danny is in the mili-

tary, our time together is limited. I have been planning a trip to visit him for an awards ceremony. It was booked and paid for three months ago.

I just learned that Danny's mother plans to "surprise" him by attending the awards ceremony and staying all weekend. Once again, there she is. I understand that she wants to support her son, but is this the way my marriage is going to be her always wanting to share in the moment?

— **Surrounded By His Mother**
Dear Surrounded: Danny may be "your man," but he is also her little boy. Perhaps his mother wouldn't hover so much if her son wasn't in the military and therefore in jeopardy.

Please cut her some slack. Also, how Danny reacts to his mother's surprise visit should give you insight into what lies ahead for you.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the internet at: <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>
Universal Press Syndicate

Dear Abby



JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NOPLY

NABAL

LIMFAY

BLOSMY

www.jumble.com

Answer: A

ON THE

Saturday's

Answer: BEIGE ABBEY TINGLE OBLONG

When their conversation turned to marriage she found it — "ENGAGING"

53,54,55,56,57...
One is missing



WHAT THE SHEPHERD DISCOVERED WHEN HE COUNTED HIS FLOCK.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Lack of affection hurts relationship

Dear Annie: I have been dating "Jon" for two years, and we became engaged last November. I am wondering if it is normal for a man not to be affectionate.

Jon rarely holds my hand or cuddles in bed at night. We recently went on a trip without my children (from a previous marriage), and he was so relaxed. We were gone four nights, and to my dismay, Jon was not once romantic or tender. We were sexually intimate, but as soon as we were finished, he just rolled over.

Are there men like this who are happily married? I don't know if I can live without affection. It makes me feel used. I've been married before and have dated several men, but I've never experienced this. I thought touching and holding came naturally. Is he normal?

— **Dumbfounded**

Dear Dumbfounded: Well, yes, within certain limits. Not all men are naturally affectionate, especially if they come from non-

Annie's Mailbox



monstrative families. It doesn't mean he isn't happy with you, but we worry that you might not be happy with him.

You need to discuss with Jon how important this is to you. He may not realize that you expect the hand-holding, cuddling and other signs that he is fond of you when you aren't having sex.

Don't wait for him to make the first move — teach him what you need. Take his hand when you are out walking. Ask for a hug before dinner. Put your arms around his neck and kiss him for no reason. If he doesn't make any effort to warm up, get couples counseling and see what can be done.

Dear Annie: Please remind your readers of the importance of having a will and making arrangements for your burial. I lost both of my parents within the past few months. They left very little assets and no will. My

sister is in possession of some of the assets, and I am left to try and pay for the burials and their other debts. I am not financially well off, but I want to do the right thing.

It seems to me that the expenses of the funeral should be split evenly. Who is responsible for these costs? I don't want to alienate my sister, but I need her help.

What should I do?

— **Still Grieving**
Dear Still Grieving: You are no more responsible for these costs than your sister. If she has not offered to split the expenses with you, pick up the phone and ask her to do so. Offer to send her an itemized accounting, and then ask her to please pay her share. If this is a financial hardship for your sister, perhaps a payment plan can be worked out, or you can ask her to contribute whatever she can manage.

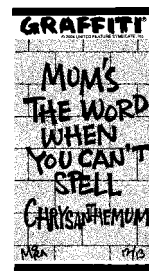
Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, Universal Press Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



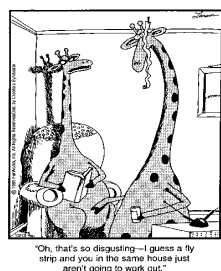
"When they played hide-and-seek, Rudolph couldn't hide because of his nose."



Demis the Menace



The Far Side



Non Sequitur



A's reportedly trade Hudson for Dodgers

BY RICK HURD AND JOE RODERICK
Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, Calif.)

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Tim Hudson sweepstakes apparently came to a conclusion late Saturday night at the Anaheim Marriott. The winner: The Los Angeles Dodgers.

Hudson's agent confirmed Saturday that the Oakland Athletics will trade Hudson to the Dodgers for right-handed pitcher Edwin Jackson and minor-league infielder Antonio Perez. The deal was expected to be announced on Sunday.

"I spoke with an executive from another team and that's what I heard," agent Billy Cohen said. "Until I hear from the principles, that's where we stand."

A's spokesman Jim Young told the Contra Costa Times he wasn't aware that any

L.A. sending two prospects to Oakland

deal had been made. General Manager Billy Beane couldn't be reached.

The apparent deal came after a 48-hour period in which several teams fought hard for Hudson, who was perhaps the most attractive trade commodity on the market. Hudson, 29, will earn \$6.5 million next season in what will be the final season of his contract. He's expected to command at least \$13 million a season if he hits the free-agent market next winter.

Whether that happens is still unclear, but Beane reiterated Saturday that the A's would not make any trade contingent on the opposing club negotiating a contract extension for Hudson.

The deal officially will end the 4½-year reign of the A's Three Aces. Hudson was 92-39 with a 3.30 in six seasons with the A's. He was 12-6 with a 3.53 ERA in 27 starts in what proved to be his closing act. His final A's season also was marred by a recurrence of a strained left oblique muscle, an injury that has plagued Hudson over the past three seasons.

In Jackson, the A's will receive one of the top pitching prospects in baseball. Jackson, a 21-year-old right-hander, has gone 4-2 in 14 appearances (eight starts) in the majors, and is a hard thrower and was highly covered by the Arizona Diamondbacks at last season's trade deadline. The Dodgers' unwillingness to part with Jackson

was reportedly one of the reasons Los Angeles could not make a trade for Diamondbacks left-hander Randy Johnson.

The A's also will receive Perez, who hit .266 with 22 homers and 88 RBIs at Triple-A Las Vegas last season.

With Perez's addition, the future of second baseman Mark Ellis falls into question. Ellis is eligible for arbitration, and the A's could now choose not to tender him a contract offer by the Dec. 20 deadline.

The Baltimore Orioles and St. Louis Cardinals had been major players for Hudson. The A's reportedly had been pushing hard for left-hander pitcher Eric Bedard, but the Orioles were reluctant to part with him. The O's reportedly also have inquired about lefty Barry Zito, but it's unlikely the A's will trade another starting pitcher.

The Cardinals were reportedly offering pitchers Dan Haren and Rick Ankiel.

Pavano picks Yankees after Sox snag Wells

Smoltz returning to starting rotation after Braves deal for closer

BY BRAD BLUM
The Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — David Wells made the surprising decision to sign with the Boston Red Sox, Carl Pavano picked the New York Yankees and Roger Clemens narrowed his choices to the Houston Astros or retirement.

Baseball free agent roundup

Pittsburgh and Cleveland finalized the first trade of the winter meetings Saturday, with reliever Arthur Rhodes going to the Indians for outfielder Matt Lawton. And Atlanta acquired All-Star closer Dan Kolb from the Milwaukee Brewers for pitching prospect Jose Capellan and a player to be named, allowing the Braves to move John Smoltz back into the starting rotation.

Boston also worked to re-sign Pedro Martinez and add shortstop Edgar Renteria. And while the Yankees' efforts to sign Pavano moved forward, there might be a hitch in Tim Lincecum's deal with Jared Wright, with the team still evaluating the results of his physical.

On the trade from Oakland discussed dealing Tim Hudson, possibly to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Baseball's annual swapfest also had a bit of spectacle on Day Two of the four-day session. Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman arrived in a lobby filled with baseball executives and agents accompanied by two tall showgirls wearing feathered headresses and a gold-cold Elvis impersonator, campaigning for Major League Baseball to put a team in the gambling mecca.

Free-agent first basemen Richie Lirio and Carlos Delgado also showed up to meet with teams.

Wells, a loud lefty known for his unabashed love of Yankees history, agreed in an 18-month, two-year contract with Boston that could be worth up to \$18 million over two years, a deal subject



Roger Clemens agreed to arbitration with the Houston Astros on Saturday, ensuring he will pitch for Houston in 2005 if he doesn't retire.

to Wells passing a physical.

It will be sort of a Babe Ruth reverse commute for Wells, who spent four seasons with the Yankees during two tours. In June 1997, he even wore a Ruth cap during a game against Cleveland.

Red Sox manager Terry Francona declined comment on Wells, but he said he wasn't worried about having too many characters on the defending World Series champions.

"Last year we had a lot of strong personalities but they didn't really go to their own way," Francona said. "They just came together. I guess that's what you want."

Wells, 41, went 12-8 with a 3.73 ERA last season for his hometown San Diego Padres and made \$6 million. He gets a \$3 million signing bonus from the Red Sox, salaries of \$2.5 million a year and the chance to earn \$300,000 per start from 11-20 and \$300,000 per start from 21-30.

"With the offer he got, it looked like it was an easy decision," Yankees General Manager Brian Cashman said.

Cashman wasn't surprised Wells bolted to his old enemy.

"Despite his love for the Yankees, he walked away from us last year," Cashman said. "The bottom line is it's a business. He had to do what's best for him and his family."

With Pavano, the Yankees' rotation will get younger. Anaheim, Baltimore, Boston, Detroit and Seattle also sought the right-hander, 18-8 with a 3.00 ERA for Florida last season.

Pavano called his agent, Scott Shapiro, on Saturday morning and informed him of his decision, and Shapiro and Cashman closed in on a four-year contract worth about \$39 million.

New York also has a preliminary agreement with right-hander Wright on a \$21 million, three-year contract, but the Yankees still are evaluating his physical exam, a baseball official said on condition of anonymity, and hasn't determined whether he passed it or failed it.

Wright, who turns 29 later this month, had shoulder surgery in 2000 and 2001. He went 15-8 with a 3.28 for Atlanta last season, the best year of his big league career.

Clemens, 42, said last week that he was leaning toward retirement and his agent, Randy Hendricks,

said the seven-time Cy Young Award winner probably will make his decision between Jan. 5-20. If Clemens decides to pitch in 2005, he and the Astros either will agree to a contract or his salary will be determined by an arbitrator.

"It certainly makes a statement to us about how Roger feels about the Houston Astros," new General Manager Tim Purpura said.

"Our interest is sincere and we'd certainly love to have him back."

Clemens' commitment to the Astros could help the team re-sign star center fielder Carlos Beltran, the prize of this year's free-agent class.

"It's not why we did it, but we understand there might be an impact," Hendricks said. "He thinks the world of Carlos and hopes he re-signs."

Rhodes, a 35-year-old left-hander, was acquired by Pittsburgh from Oakland on Nov. 27 in the trade that sent catcher Jason Kendall to the Athletics. Rhodes lost his closer's job last season while going 3-3 with a 5.12 ERA for the A's. He will become Bob Wickman's setup man in Cleveland.

"There were a multitude of things that happened to him to explain why he had a bad year. We're still hopeful he's going to be a strong, solid contributor in the bullpen," Cleveland General Manager Mark Shapiro said.

Pavano has a huge accomplishment with the Indians, who acquired him in the 2001 trade that sent Roberto Alomar to the New York Yankees. The 33-year-old had 12 injuries during much of his three seasons in Cleveland.

"He's got some power, a left-handed hitter, it adds some nice balance to our offense," General Manager Dave Littlefield said.

Smoltz won 24 games and the NL Cy Young Award as a starter in 1996 before moving to the bullpen full-time in 2002. He set an NL record that year with 55 saves, joining Hall of Famer Dennis Eckersley as the only pitchers with seasons of 55 saves and 20 wins.

"It's nice when one of your leaders is willing to do whatever is needed. We need him to stay," Braves General Manager John Schuerholz said.

Anaheim close to reeling in Clement

The Los Angeles Times

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Anaheim Angels have identified Matt Clement as their top target in the free-agent pitching market and are confident they will be able to sign the former Chicago Cubs right-hander to a three-year deal in the \$21 million range, perhaps as early as Sunday or Monday.

"It appears that we're going to have an opportunity to get something done in this area we expected to get something done," General Manager Bill Stoneman said Saturday, alluding to the team's pursuit of a starting pitcher but declining to identify the player. "We've had conversations that suggest to us that there's a pretty good chance of getting something done. I have a good feeling about it."

The Angels were also monitoring the Jared Wright situation Saturday and were poised to offer the former Atlanta Braves right-hander a one-year contract if his three-year, \$21 million agreement with the New York Yankees fell through.

But ESPN reported late Saturday that after failing his physical, Wright took another one Saturday night and passed, paving the way for the eight-year veteran and son of former Angels pitcher Clyde Wright to finalize his deal with the New York Yankees.

With Carl Pavano agreeing to a four-year, \$39 million deal with the Yankees on Saturday, Russ Ortiz signing a four-year, \$33 million deal with Arizona on Friday and Eric Milton on the verge of signing with the Yankees, the Angels decided to move quickly on Clement, one of the few remaining starters on their free-agent priority list.

Notre Dame close to hiring Patriots' Weis

By TOM COYNE

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Notre Dame is close to hiring New England Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis as its new coach, a university source said Saturday night, but the deal is not complete and still could fall apart.

The Fighting Irish have been searching for nearly two weeks for a replacement for Tyrone Willingham, who was fired Nov. 30 after posting a 21-15 record in three years.

The source, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press that some procedural issues that could be deal-breakers remained in the talks with Weis.

ESPN, quoting sources close to the university, reported Saturday night that Weis had agreed to a six-year contract that will pay him about \$2 million a year. The network said Weis will fly to South Bend, Ind., to meet with Notre Dame players after the Patriots' game Sunday against Cincinnati, and that a news conference at Notre Dame is set for Monday.

Weis could not be reached at his Massachusetts home Saturday night. A Patriots

spokesman said the team had no comment on the reports.

"We have not hired anybody yet, and we don't have a press conference scheduled," Notre Dame associate athletic director John Heiser said Saturday night. "Nothing is official. The process is ongoing. . . . No deal is done from our standpoint."

Weis would be the first Notre Dame alum to coach the Irish since Hugh Devore was interim coach in 1963. Though he never played for the Fighting Irish, Weis graduated from the school in 1978 with a degree in communications and education.

Weis, 48, started as a high school coach and has long wanted to become a head coach. He went as far as undergoing gastric bypass surgery to help improve his chances of getting a job.

He said he primarily underwent the surgery for health reasons because his father died at age 56 from complications of being overweight, and because of the death in 2001 of fellow assistant coach Dick Rehbein at 45 from degenerative heart disease.

But he also knew that losing weight would help him become a head coach.

"I think there's a lot of validity in the

thought that appearance comes into play," he said two years ago.

The surgery led to life-threatening internal bleeding that forced him to undergo surgery again two days later and kept him in intensive care for nearly two weeks. Weis' success with the Patriots hurt his chances of getting an NFL head coaching job. He interviewed last year with the New York Giants and Buffalo Bills, but an NFL rule that prohibits assistants from being hired while their teams are still in the playoffs essentially prevented him from being seriously considered.

His weight problems and near-death experience also might have hurt his chances because of speculation his health wasn't good enough to handle a head coaching job.

"I think some people were totally misguided in terms of my physical abilities to put in a full day," Weis said last year.

If Weis is hired by Notre Dame, it is unclear when he would leave the Patriots. Notre Dame Bill Belichick said Friday he expects Weis to stay with the team through the season.

"Charlie, I expect, will continue to be here and carry out his responsibilities through the season," Belichick said.

Weis taught and coached high school for five years before taking an assistant's job at South Carolina for four seasons. He returned to coaching at high school for one year before joining the New York Giants' pro personnel department in 1989.

Weis was hired by the Giants as defensive assistant and assistant special teams coach in 1990, earning his first Super Bowl ring. When Ray Handley was named coach of the Giants in 1991, he named Weis running backs coach.

Weis worked for the Patriots from 1993-96, coaching tight ends, running backs and wide receivers. In 1997, Weis was hired by Jets coach Bill Parcells, who asked former New York Giants offensive coordinator Ron Erhardt to groom Weis as the Jets' offensive coordinator. In 1998, he was named Jets' offensive coordinator-wide receivers coach.

He has been the Patriots' offensive coordinator the past five seasons, earning two more Super Bowl rings.

He is credited with helping to develop quarterback Tom Brady, tight end Ben Coates, running back Curtis Martin, wide receiver Terry Glenn and former Notre Dame receiver David Givens.

Walker leads Valdosta to title

The Associated Press

FLORENCE, Ala. — Valdosta State rallied to win its first NCAA Division II championship Saturday, with Fabian Walker throwing two touchdowns passes and running for a score in the Blazers' 36-31 victory over Pittsburg State.

Valdosta State (13-1) forced four turnovers and held Pittsburg State (14-1) to 371 yards of total offense — 243 below the Gorillas' average. The Blazers intercepted two passes and recovered two fumbles.

Valdosta State's Terrence Bell intercepted two passes, including a momentum-changer late in the first quarter after the Gorillas had taken a 14-0 lead.

"All season long we've bent, but we've come up with turnovers at the right time," Valdosta State coach Chris Hatcher said.

Walker threw a 1-yard touchdown pass to Zach Parker early in the second quarter to start the comeback, and Valdosta State took the lead for the first time early in the second half when Pittsburg State punter Andy Majors dropped a snap in the end zone and was stopped for a safety, giving the Blazers a 19-17 lead.

Walker, a former starter at Florida State, completed 19 of 27 passes for 165 yards and ran for 55 yards and 11 carries.

"It's all ending on a good note," Walker said. "I just thank God that I had the opportunity to come here and help this team win."

Leading 36-31 late in the fourth quarter, Valdosta State converted on a fourth-down play with a fake punt to keep the ball and hold onto the lead.

Division I-AA

Montana 34, Sam Houston St. 13. At Missoula, Mont., Craig Ecks passed for 204 yards and three touchdowns and Montana forced four turnovers in the I-AA semifinals.

NCAA playoffs

The Grizzlies (12-2) avenged a 41-29 regular-season loss to Sam Houston and reached the national championship game for the fifth time in 10 years.

Montana, the national champion in 1995 and 2001, will face James Madison, a 48-34 winner over William & Mary on Friday night in the other semifinal, in next week's title game in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Tuff Harris set up Montana's first two touchdowns with interceptions, and the Grizzlies sacked Dustin Long six times, matching the number of times he was sacked this season.

Sam Houston (11-3) shut down Montana's running game, so the Grizzlies turned to Ochs.

Ochs was 22-for-30 for 204 yards and led the Grizzlies in rushing with eight carries for 77 yards. He had touchdown passes of 25 yards and 15 yards, 15 yards to Tate Hancock and 14 yards to Jon Talmage.

Division III

Mary Hardin-Baylor 38, Mount Union 35. In just his third career start, freshman quarterback Josh Welch guided Mary Hardin-Baylor into the Division III championship game.

Welch threw a 24-yard touchdown pass to Walter Sharp on fourth down with 49 seconds to play, lifting the Crusaders to a 35-30 comeback victory over Mount Union on Saturday in Alliance, Ohio.

It was just the third loss in 123 games for the Purple Raiders, who have won six of the past eight Division III titles.

"It just fell into my hands," said Sharp, who fought off two Purple Raiders to make the catch in swirling snow. "I just squeezed the ball as hard as I could and my

teammates jumped on top of me," the senior tight end said.

Mary Hardin-Baylor outscored Mount Union 17-0 in the fourth quarter.

The Crusaders (13-1) will play for their first championship in the Amos Alston Stagg Bowl on Dec. 18 in Salem, Va., against Linfield, which beat Rowan 52-9 Saturday.

"This is the ultimate at this time," Crusaders coach Pete Freudenberg said. "We obviously want to win the national championship, but to come here and beat Mount Union is unbelievable. It is something we have talked about, playing a team of this caliber, for years."

Mount Union's previous two losses were in the 1999 semifinals to Rowan — a 24-17 setback after 54 straight wins — and to St. John's (Minn.) in last year's title game. That 24-6 loss snapped the longest winning streak in NCAA history at 55 games.

The Crusaders overpowered Mount Union (12-1) on the ground, piling up 308 yards rushing and 477 yards total offense, 155 yards than the Purple Raiders had yielded in any game all season.

"The rushing yardage tells the story," said Mount Union coach Larry Kehres, who has a 21-19-3 record in 19 seasons. "A pass won't win them, but their runners got there."

Linfield 52, Rowan 0. In McMinnville, Ore., Brett Elliott broke the NCAA single-season touchdown record, throwing for 254 yards and three TDs to help Linfield rout Rowan.

Elliott, a junior transfer from Utah, connected with Brad McKechie in the first quarter for his 37th touchdown pass of the season, breaking the record set by former Mississippi Valley State quarterback Willie Totten in 1984.

Elliott added TD strikes of 28 and 51 yards to George Carter to extend the record to 59.



USC quarterback Matt Leinart, left, kept Oklahoma quarterback Jason White, right, from repeating as the Heisman Trophy winner.

Heisman: Leinart second USC QB to win award

HEISMAN, FROM BACK PAGE

Leinart had never thrown a pass at USC when he won a futility battle to replace Palmer in 2003.

The left-hander practically matched Palmer's Heisman numbers in his first season as a starter, throwing for 3,556 yards and 38 TDs while leading the Trojans to a share of the national title. He finished sixth in last year's Heisman balloting.

While Bush has provided a slew of dazzling plays for USC, the laid-back Leinart is the Trojan leader.

Breaking in a new set of receivers and playing behind a rebuilt offensive line, Leinart has completed 66 percent of his passes for just six interceptions this season.

"There was a lot of questions going into the season," Leinart said. "I think we answered them."

The Trojans are 24-1 with Leinart as a starter and have won 21 straight games.

USC's first four Heisman winners were running backs, starting with Mike Garrett in 1965 and ending with Marcus Allen in 1981.

But Tailback U. has turned into Quarterback College since offensive coordinator Norm Chow arrived with coach Pete Carroll in 2001.

Chow turned Palmer from a talented enigma into a potential NFL franchise quarterback. Leinart is Chow's third protégé to win the Heisman, along with BYU's Ty Detmer.

Leinart could also join Palmer as an NFL first-round pick, maybe as soon as April if he decides to skip his final college season.

That's quite a rise for the geeky kid from Santa Ana, Calif.

"No, I was a fat kid and cross-eyed and had glasses on an inch thick," Leinart said. "I use to get made fun of. It's been a long time since those days."

Heavyweight champ Klitschko pummels outclassed Williams

BY TIM DAHLBERG

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Vitali Klitschko made one statement with his fists, and another with his mouth. Both came through loud and clear in a dominating title defense that elevated him to the top of a crowded list of heavyweight champions.

Klitschko staked his claim to being the true heavyweight champion Saturday night, knocking down Danny Williams four times and giving him a savage beating before finally stopping him in the eighth round.

He then dedicated the victory to democracy in his native Ukraine, where he planned to head Sunday to support the opposition presidential candidate.

"I feel this was the best performance of my career," Klitschko said. "But this victory was not just for me, but also for democracy in Ukraine."

Klitschko retained his WBC

heavyweight title in a lopsided fight that left Williams bloodied, battered and barely able to see.

Williams was taken to a hospital for a brain scan after the fight, while Klitschko also went to have X-rays taken of his swollen hands to see if they were broken from hitting Williams on the head so many times during the championship.

Williams remained game even after the final knockdown in the eighth round, getting up at the count of nine and wanting to continue. But referee Jay Nady decided he had taken enough punishment and waved the fight to a close at 1:26 of the round.

"I feel I am the real heavyweight champion," Klitschko said. "I'm willing to fight anybody."

Klitschko, who owns just one of the three major heavyweight titles, made a case for being the best of the three champions in a dominating effort against a game but completely outclassed challenger.

Klitschko did something Mike Tyson couldn't do against Williams, knocking him down in the first round and giving him such a beating that Williams couldn't come back as he did in his upset over Tyson.

Williams (32-4) tried his best, plodding after Klitschko in the third round, but he rarely got inside the 6-foot-7 champion's stiff jaw and took a pounding from his right hand.

"My strategy was to use my reach because I knew he would try to get close to me," Klitschko said.

There had been questions about Klitschko's stamina and his tendency to cut around his eyes, but he had no problems with either in a fight he dominated from the opening bell.

With his brother, Wladimir, working the corner, Klitschko swarmed all over Williams in the opening round, landing 52 punches to only four for the challenger.



The Ukraine's Vitali Klitschko, lands a right to the face of Britain's Danny Williams, in the first round of their WBC heavyweight title fight Saturday in Las Vegas. Klitschko stopped Williams in the eighth round.

He knocked Williams down with 37 seconds left in the round and hit him almost at will.

Klitschko wore an orange flag on his trunks, signifying his support for Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko.

Others in the crowd waved Ukrainian flags and orange flags,

the color of their candidate's campaign.

Klitschko (35-2, 34 knockouts) knocked Williams down in the first, third and seventh rounds before the final knockdown.

"I was surprised because he never gave up," Klitschko said. "I was surprised how strong his chin was."

Montgomerie stays on Target

The Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Colin Montgomerie passed a big test Saturday, overcoming a few obnoxious fans and a pairing with Tiger Woods to post a 4-under 67 and take a two-shot lead in the Target World Challenge.

Montgomerie was hardly intimidated playing with the tournament's

most needed only four holes to put four shots between them on the leader board.

And when Jay Haas made a charge into the lead, the 41-year-old Scot responded with a 4-iron into 8 feet for eagle on the par-5 16th and a 9-iron into 8 feet for another birdie on the 17th to finish at 13-under 200.

"There's no satisfaction beating any player," Montgomerie said. "The satisfaction comes from seeing your name on the top of the leader board."

Sweeter yet would be seeing it there Sunday afternoon, having Woods hand him the trophy and cashing the \$1.25 million check, the fourth-largest payout.

Woods recovered from a terrible start — 3 over after four holes — to a birdie-par-birdie finish for a 69 that left him two shots behind along with Haas (67) and Jim Furyk, who birdied five of his last six holes for a 67.

And Miguel Angel Jimenez had the low round of the day at 66 and was another shot behind.

Injured Dolphins WR Boston suspended for four games

NEW YORK — Miami Dolphins wide receiver David Boston was suspended by the NFL for four games for testing positive for steroids, but he will not miss any



Bode Miller celebrates in Val d'Isere, France, after winning a World Cup giant slalom Sunday.

games because he is out for the season with a knee injury.

Boston, however, will lose \$1.34 million, one-fourth of his \$5.35 million salary.

The suspension also means Boston can be subject to more stringent testing for steroids under the NFL program. The league has random testing, but this means he can be tested without notice at any time.

Last week, he pleaded innocent to assault charges in Burlington, Vt. He was accused of striking a ticket attendant at Burlington International Airport in October.

George inactive vs. Saints

IRVING, Texas — Eddie George missed the first game of his NFL career Sunday after playing in 140 straight, made inactive by the Dallas Cowboys but because of injury but because he wasn't needed.

Coach Bill Parcells opted to keep the 1995 Heisman Trophy

winner out against New Orleans because of the emergence of rookie Julius Jones, the return to health of third-down back Richie Anderson, and with ReShard Lee returning kickoffs and Darian Barnes the team's only fullback.

George's streak of 130 consecutive starts for the Titans and Cowboys ended Sept. 27, when Dallas opened the game with an empty backfield. His 10,433 career yards rushing rank 16th in NFL history.

Miller wins giant slalom

VAL D'ISERE, France — World Cup overall leader Bode Miller won a giant slalom for the second time this season Sunday, rallying from fourth place in the opening leg.

Miller, who took the season-opening giant slalom but failed to complete the one in Beaver Creek, Colo., covered the shadowy course in a combined time of 2 minutes, 26.66 seconds. The American needed to make up 0.30 seconds after the first run.

"It's such a tough course," said Miller, who won his weight in local wine — about 90 bottles — in addition to his prize money.

Miller now leads the overall standings with 630 points, a whopping 291 ahead of second-place Hermann Maier, who finished third on Sunday.

NHL World Stars beat Russians in shootout

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — Mats Sundin and Luc Robitaille scored in a penalty shootout, securing victory for the NHL World Stars in a two-game series against Russia.

The World Stars won 5-4 on Sunday to tie the series 1-1 after losing 5-4 to the Russians in Moscow on Saturday.

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Marquette's Travis Diener celebrates as he runs in front of his team's bench after hitting a three-point shot during the second half against No. 24 Wisconsin on Saturday night. Marquette beat the Badgers 63-54.

Deiner's 29 carries unbeaten Marquette

Eagles jump out to big early lead, hold on late vs. No. 24 Wisconsin

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Travis Diener and Mike Wilkinson played hurt but with very different results.

Diener scored 29 points despite aggravating a sprained ankle in the first half and led unbeaten Marquette past No. 24 Wisconsin 63-54 Saturday night.

"We've never held our halftime in the training room, but we moved the grease boards and everything in and we had guys sitting on Gatorade coolers and looking over shoulders," Golden Eagles coach Tom Crean said. "He did more than just play well, he led well."

Wilkinson was unable to do either. Bothered by a lower leg injury, the Badgers' senior big man and No. 2 scorer managed just two points and one rebound in 23 minutes and spent about half the game on the bench watching Marquette beat the Badgers at their own game: taking the ball to the basket and hitting the basket.

Marquette rebounded the taller Badgers 44-28 behind senior Marcus Jackson's career-high 15, 12 on the defensive end, in just 21 minutes. Wisconsin had just four offensive boards.

Diener scored 10 points in Marquette's game-opening 12-1 spurt and the Golden Eagles (9-9) led

thereafter in beating their instate rivals for just the second time in six tries under Crean.

After the improvised halftime talk and re-taping, Diener sank two three-pointers to start the second half and had 21 points to Wisconsin's 23, giving the Eagles a 40-23 lead.

"He was up to the challenge tonight," Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan marveled. "He can score, he can find people. What else do you want in a point guard?"

As for his own gutsy play, Ryan regretted allowing Wilkinson to play.

"I normally have a policy that if a guy doesn't participate for two straight days he doesn't play," Ryan said. "I'll take the hit on that one. There was a shot in the second half where it was obvious he could not push off. We knew he had to come out."

Alando Tucker scored 13 points for the Badgers (5-2) and Sharif Chambliss added 12 points, but was dominated by Diener on both ends of the court.

Marquette's Steve Novak added 11 points, including a three-point shot that made it 52-40 with 4:42 left after the Badgers finally cut the deficit below double figures on Tucker's three-pointer. The Badgers made a late rally over the final five minutes but got no closer than six points, and the sellout crowd of 18,611 delighted in singing, "Over-rated!"

Stony Brook uses 7-0 run to top Navy in overtime

The Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Mike Orfni followed his tip-in with 90 seconds left in overtime with three more points during a 7-0 game-closing run as Stony Brook beat Navy 80-78 on Saturday night.

Antwan Hardy scored 19 points to lead Stony Brook (4-3). Center Cori Spencer chipped in with 16 points and added nine rebounds, helping the Seawolves to a 60-44 advantage on the boards.

Navy (3-5) made up for the rebounding disadvantage by forcing a season-high 21 turnovers, eight over Stony Brook's season average.

Navy was led by David Hopper with 23 points. Matt Fanin scored 18 points and grabbed 11 rebounds and Laramie Mergerson scored 12 points and blocked three shots.

Kansas makes Lafayette pay for payday

BY DOUG TUCKER
The Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The Ragin' Cajuns of Louisiana-Lafayette earned every nickel of that big paycheck Saturday night.

Dominant from the opening tip, No. 2 Kansas built an early 30-point lead and coasted to a 96-51 victory in a mismatch that guaranteed the outmanned visitors \$50,000.

Louisiana-Lafayette coach Robert Lee seemed almost reluctant to admit that he was the one who made the final decision to add Kansas trip.

"We should shoot that guy," the first-year head coach said.

"Kansas gives us a nice payday. Hopefully we will use that for our program."

Keith Langford had 19 of his 24 points during a torrid first half and J.R. Giddens had 14 of his 16 before the break. Most of the starters for Kansas (6-0) went to the bench with more than 10 minutes left in the mismatch between the preseason favorite in the Big 12 and the three-time defending champion of the Sun Belt West.

Had they stayed in, several Jayhawks might have soured past their career highs.

"I wasn't disappointed," Giddens said of coming out so early. "That means my other teammates got to play and that's what it's all about. They deserve it because they make us better every day in practice."

Langford, after a slow start following knee surgery, has 62 points in his last three games. He was 7-for-9 in the first half as the Jay-



Kansas guard Keith Langford, left, drives past Louisiana-Lafayette's Brian Hamilton (45) for a first-half basket. No. 2 Kansas rolled 96-51.

hawks rolled up a 54-22 lead in their sixth straight home game.

"To tell you the truth, I probably wasn't being as aggressive as I should have," Langford said. "We got some floor time out of guys who don't get to play as much, and that's good for them. I'd have been fine if I hadn't even played the second half."

Louisiana-Lafayette (3-4) was led by Tiras Wade and Brian Hamilton with 12 points each. The Ragin' Cajuns got no closer than 35 points after the first few minutes of the second half. They shot only 32 percent.

"We got a chance to play a lot of guys," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "Louisiana-Lafayette has played better than they did tonight."

Wayne Simien had 11 points and 12 rebounds before resting with 10:45 left.

The game, never competitive, began getting completely out of hand midway through the second half, when Aaron Miles stole the ball at midcourt and drove in for a basket and a 65-27 lead. A moment later, Simien hit a short jumper and the lead climbed to 40.

"They sat in a zone and Keith and J.R. made some big shots to get them out of the zone," Simien said. "It was curtains after that."

The Ragin' Cajuns got it down to 35 on Dwayne Mitchell's three-pointer, but freshman Alex Galindo's three-pointer with 6:59 left put Kansas on top 80-39.

The loss kept the Cajuns winless in five road games this season.

"We just didn't do a good job on defense," Lee said. "Even against our zone, Langford was able to penetrate."

Wade, Hamilton and Orien Greene had combined to average 44.9 points in the Cajuns' first six games. But they totaled only 28 against the Jayhawks.

"Shooting is a question mark with this team," Lee said.

"With us not being able to execute, we had the wrong guys taking shots."

Ga. Tech too much for AFA to handle

BY PAUL NEWBERRY
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Georgia Tech likes to run every chance it gets, but Air Force wasn't about to let the Yellow Jackets beat that style of game.

So, the Yellow Jackets had to show a little patience.

Luke Schenschler scored 15 points and No. 3 Georgia Tech overcame Air Force's slow pace for a 64-42 victory Saturday.

The Yellow Jackets (6-0) were forced into a game that was totally out of character. They attempted a season-low 40 shots and failed to make a three-pointer for the first time since 1987.

"They definitely took control of the tempo," Schenschler said. "We couldn't run it like we normally like to do."

Georgia Tech still managed to dominate, leading 32-12 at halftime and holding the Falcons (6-3) to 28 percent shooting (15-of-54) from the field.



Georgia Tech's B.J. Elder drives to the basket past Air Force's Antoine Hood during the first half of Saturday's game. No. 3 Georgia Tech beat the Falcons 64-42.

"We came in knowing that we're No. 3," Schenschler said. "We have to show everyone they were there. We don't look past anyone."

The 7-foot-1 Schenschler towered over everyone, taking full advantage of the mismatch. He made six of nine shots, had three blocks and grabbed eight rebounds, leading the Yellow Jackets to a commanding 35-22 edge on the boards.

Air Force stretched out the shot clock on nearly every possession with its Princeton-style offense, but that merely kept the score from getting totally out of hand.

Air Force was hopelessly over-matched in size and quickness. That was epitomized at the center position, where Schenschler held a five-inch, 40-pound advantage over Nick Welch, who still managed to lead the Falcons with 16 points.

He didn't get much help. No other Air Force player scored more than six.

Syracuse back to winning

The Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — The first loss of the season is never easy to get over, and it took Syracuse a little bit longer than expected.

Playing a team it had beaten by a combined 104 points in three previous games, No. 4 Syracuse led Binghamton only 36-28 at halftime Saturday night before pulling away for an 86-56 victory. Hakim Warrick had 20 points and Gerry McNamara 18 to lead the Orange.

"The offense rushed it and we had some bad turnovers (in the first half)," Syracuse coach Jim Boheim said. "The second half we backed off our press, got softer, got a couple of turnovers, which gave us some momentum."

In the first half, Binghamton (2-5) forced the Orange (8-1) into 10 turnovers, matched their 21 rebounds, and held a 9-6 edge on the offensive glass. Maybe that led to No. 5 Oklahoma State in the Jimmy V Classic on Tuesday was still haunting them.

"You want to put it behind you. No matter what, no matter how hard you play, it's a long season and you're going to have to lose some games," said Warrick, who missed only one of six free throws after hitting eight against the Cowboys. "It's good to go out there, get that experience early in the year against a tough team. We just have to put it behind us and learn from it, and tonight was a good step forward."

Syracuse built a big lead in the first seven minutes, going up 15-3 on a three-pointer by freshman guard Josh Wright. But after missing their first three three-pointers of the game, the Bearcats found the game. They heard and Schaefer-Jackson connected on consecutive three-pointers in a 29-second span to move Binghamton within 15-11.

Two follow shots by Darryl Watkins helped Syracuse stretch its

Men's Top 25 Roundup

lead back to 30-17 with 6:54 left. Then Binghamton, which plays in the America East Conference, rallied against the Orange's man-to-man and press, pulling to 34-28 on a follow up by Alex Adefurin with 1:18 to go.

Syracuse scored the first eight points of the second half while Binghamton missed its first four shots, then went on a 16-6 run to secure the victory.

No. 11 Pittsburgh 84, Penn State 71: At State College, Pa., Carl Krauser scored a career-high 28 points and Pittsburgh held off Penn State flurries in each half, giving the Panthers their third 7-0 record in as many seasons. The Panthers beat the Nittany Lions (5-4) for a fourth consecutive season in the intrastate series.

Chevon Troutman and Antonio Graves scored 18 points each for Pittsburgh, which finally played a relatively close game after winning its first six by an average of 26.5 points.

No. 12 N.C. State 94, Liberty 60: At Raleigh, N.C., Julius Hodge had 27 points, nine rebounds and nine assists.

Freshman Andrew Brackman added a season-high 13 points for the Wolfpack (7-0), who matched their best record under ninth-year coach Herb Sendek.

The Flames (1-5) only have beaten Division III Shenandoah this season, and that victory came in overtime. Larry Beal scored 22 points and was the only player in double figures for Liberty, which shot only 40 percent and made 14 turnovers.

No. 18 Alabama 75, Temple 71: At Tuscaloosa, Ala., Earnest Shelton scored 22 points, and Ala-

bama hit six of 10 free throws in the final 62 seconds.

The Crimson Tide (8-1) led by 12 points early in the second half. But the Owls (3-4), paced by Mark Tyndal (22 points) and seven rebounds, rallied with seven three-pointers in the first 13 minutes after the break.

No. 21 George Washington 79, St. Francis 64: At Loreto, Pa., Pops Mensah-Bonsu scored 17 points, and George Washington used a 20-2 run late in the first half to take control. George Washington (6-1) was playing for the first time since knocking off ranked opponents Michigan State and Maryland on consecutive days last week.

The Colonials are in the top 25 for the first time since 1998.

Jason Osborne led St. Francis (4-3) with 24 points.

No. 22 Mississippi St. 83, Arkansas-Little Rock 53: At Starkville, Miss., Lawrence Roberts scored 21 of his season-high 27 points in the first half to lead Mississippi State.

Roberts scored the Bulldogs' first 10 points, then keyed a 21-0 spurt late in the half which helped Mississippi State (7-2) seize control against Arkansas-Little Rock (4-4).

The Trogans got their six points from leading scorer Brandon Freeman — nearly 10 below his average.

No. 25 Gonzaga 75, Saint Louis 45: At Spokane, Wash., Adam Johnson scored 20 points and Gonzaga won despite just two points from Ronny Turiaf.

Gonzaga (7-1) was four straight games losing to top-ranked Illinois. Turiaf entered averaging 23 points per game.

Reddie Bryant scored 16 points for Saint Louis (1-6), which lost its fourth straight game. The Billikens shot just 30 percent and made only six of 20 three-pointers.

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His mind clear, Davis in top form

BY LARRY LAGE
The Associated Press

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Paul Davis cleared his mind and a strong performance followed.

Davis scored a season-high 20 points and keyed a first-half surge to lead No. 20 Michigan State to a 78-53 victory over Stanford on Saturday.

The 6-foot-11 junior said his thoughts are no longer cluttered with the NBA or the expectations on him.

"My whole head is clear," Davis said. "I feel like I'm on cloud nine because of how I played and we played. I hadn't played the way I wanted to all season."

Michigan State (5-2) took control with an 18-4 run midway through the first half and was able to coast the rest of the way.

Davis started the spurt with a low-post move for a basket, then added a jumper and three-point play.

"He demanded the ball and we

got him the ball," Michigan State coach Tom Izzo said.

Davis, talented enough to score 17 points at Duke, was taken out of the starting lineup in the Spartans' previous game after being held to seven against George Washington.

Davis acknowledged the battles he wages in his mind have been more daunting than any opponent.

"It's been like that my whole career," he said.

Davis made seven of 12 shots and grabbed eight rebounds against the Cardinal (2-4) — "Paul Davis was a beast inside," Stanford's Chris Hernandez said. "It really opened things up when they could go to him."

Michigan State's Maurice Acker scored 12, Alan Anderson had 11 and Shannon Brown added 10.

Matt Haryasz led the Cardinal with 12 points. Stanford's Dan Grandis, who was averaging 19.4, was held to 6 points on 2-9 shooting.

Stanford has three starters

back from last season's team, which was 30-2 and had a No. 1 rank, but is without the 100-player of the year, Josh Childress, now with the Atlanta Hawks, and Mike Montgomery, who left to coach the Golden State Warriors.

"We're struggling to adjust to our new roles," said Cardinal coach Trent Johnson, who led Nevada past Michigan State in the first round of the NIT tournament last season. "Our margin of error is very small."

The Cardinal played for the first time since Nov. 28 and will not play their home opener until Dec. 18, though Staples Pavilion is being renovated.

Stanford led 13-6 after converting five Michigan State turnovers into 11 points before the game slipped away from the road-weary team.

The Spartans made four straight shots — following a 2-for-13 start — to go ahead for good. The decisive run gave Michigan State a 24-17 edge, and it led by nine at halftime.

"Their depth broke us down," Johnson said.

Gordon steps up for Bulls

BY RICK GANO

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Ben Gordon's still making the difficult adjustment from college star to the NBA, but Saturday night he showed why the Chicago Bulls made him a first-round choice.

Gordon scored a career-high 31 points, rescuing the Bulls from a furious Minnesota rally with 16 in the fourth quarter, as Chicago nearly blew a 24-point lead before beating the Timberwolves 99-88.

"I kind of got hot right away. I felt like I was back at UConn or something," Gordon said.

Gordon was 13-for-24 from the field, including 7-for-9 in the final period, and had made all four of his three-pointers. He's coming off the bench right now and his rate Saturday night was a point a minute — 31 points in 31 minutes.

"In the beginning of the year, I kinda had to find my way out. I'm starting to come along. I still have a lot of learning to do and there are things I can get better at," Gordon added.

"I just figured there were some growing pains. Every level of basketball I played, I always struggled at the beginning until I figured it out. I'm just starting to get a little more comfortable."

Minnesota trailed by 14 in the second quarter and rallied within one in the final period but couldn't get the lead because Gordon scored 10 straight points for the Bulls at one juncture, hitting a pair of three-pointers.

Gordon's final basket of the game came with the Bulls comfortably ahead in the closing seconds. He started to dribble out the clock, but then shot it just before the buzzer.

"I saw the basket and my eyes lit up," Gordon said.

Minnesota's Kevin Garnett was impressed with Gordon's game, but not the final shot.

"That was bull," said Garnett, who had 16 points — matching his season low — and 21 rebounds. "If he was going to the basket it would have been different. ... Gordon just came out and had a monster game. It's our first time seeing the young fellow play or at least playing against him. He had a good game."

Kirk Hinrich added 19 points for the Bulls (4-14), who had lost 10 straight to Minnesota and not beaten the Timberwolves since the days of Michael Jordan on April 3, 1998.

Tyson Chandler added 10 points and 16 rebounds for Chicago.

Sam Cassell scored 17 points, but Minnesota shot just 36 percent.



Chicago Bulls center Eddy Curry reacts after scoring against the Minnesota Timberwolves.

"We didn't deserve to win this game, plain and simple," Cassell said. "We came out lackadaisical. They made shots when they were supposed to make shots, and Ben Godon had the game of his life."

Backups taking heat off of Shaq

BY TIM REYNOLDS

The Associated Press

MIAMI — Shaquille O'Neal's opinion of Christian Laettner has come full circle.

"I used to hate Christian Laettner," O'Neal recently demanded.

Then they became teammates in Miami, with O'Neal carrying the bulk of the inside load while Laettner and Michael Doleac relieve the 11-time All-Star center from the pounding he takes on the floor. Early results suggest this is a good mix, with the Heat having the most wins in the Eastern Conference.

O'Neal is averaging 20.1 points and 11.2 rebounds for Miami (14-7). He's getting plenty of rest in Miami games, as is on pace to average what would be a career-low 34 minutes — which would conceivably allow him to be more rested for the playoff grind.

Doleac and Laettner — both free-agent signings during the summer — combined to make six of nine shots, score 14 points and grab 10 rebounds in Miami's 92-84 win over Memphis on Friday night. The main contributions came from Dwyane Wade (26 points, nine rebounds, nine assists) and O'Neal (20 points), but the work of the backups was duly noted.

"One of the things that has sort of gone unnoticed in the last five games here by people is that our backup big guys are doing a very, very good job for us," Heat coach Stan Van Gundy said.

"We're getting good play out of Christian and Mike virtually every night."

Laettner's introduction to Miami didn't go exactly as he hoped.

He missed the season's first 11 games with a sore knee, but he has made 50.3 percent of his shots since being activated from the injured list. He scored 23 points last week in Miami's 105-81 road win over Chicago.

"My body feels fine," Laettner said. "All I need is reps and time and some experience out there on the court, and things will come around. And they are starting to come around. I'm getting a feel out there. I'm doing a little better here and there."

Doleac's numbers don't seem impressive: a 3.2 point average, with only one double-digit game. Yet he's making nearly half his shots and plays defense effectively enough that Van Gundy doesn't unnecessarily rush O'Neal through his rest stops.

"I just do my job and try to play solid basketball," Doleac said. "We all understand what we're here to do. We're here to win games. It's not rocket science. When it's time for Shaq to get a blow, we go in and try to hold down the fort."

The big man is appreciative. "For the first time in my career, I can feel comfortable about sitting down," O'Neal said. "These guys are my first true backups. I can get some rest. Mike's going to put up six to eight (points). Christian's going to put up six to eight. So as long as those guys are doing that and remain confident, we're going to go a long way."

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SPORTS



Dodgers reportedly land
Hudson from A's; Pavano
heading to N.Y., Page 25

USC's Leinart wins Heisman

Past two winners will make history when they play for national title

BY RALPH D. RUSSO

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Matt Leinart got a hearty handshake and a bear hug from Jason White, one Heisman Trophy winner congratulating the other.

The next time the two compete will be far less cordial — and a lot more historic. Leinart won the Heisman on Saturday night and set up the first game in college football history featuring two players with Heisman trophies.

The Southern California quarterback faces White's Oklahoma Sooners on Jan. 4 in the Orange Bowl with a national title on the line.

"I know they're going to be coming after me," Leinart said of the Sooners.

White had a chance to become just the second two-time Heisman winner, joining Ohio State tailback Archie Griffin (1974 and '75).

Instead he finished third, behind Leinart and Oklahoma freshman Adrian Peterson. Leinart and White talked before the ceremony, and the Sooners' quarterback predicted the outcome.

"He said, 'Get ready for your speech,'" Leinart said. "I was like, 'Come on, man.'"

As a former winner, White had a vote. He said he put Peterson No. 1 on his ballot and Leinart second. The third spot he left blank and let someone else — he wouldn't say who — fill it out.

White said he still doesn't know who that person picked.

"I think Matt showed great character on the field and leadership," White said.

Leinart talked to White during the summer about winning the award.

"He said it changed his life," Leinart said.

Last year, Leinart succeeded 2002 Heisman winner Carson Palmer with a splendid sophomore season that set him up as the preseason favorite in 2004.

Leinart has delivered, throwing for 2,990 yards and 28 TDs and leading the top-ranked Trojans to a 12-0 regular season.

The junior is USC's sixth Heisman winner, tying the Trojans with Ohio State for second-most behind Notre Dame's seven.

"I remember when Carson was sitting up here," Leinart said. "He said his heart was beating out of his chest, I think mine's about to do the same thing."

Utah quarterback Alex Smith was fourth, and Leinart's teammate Reggie Bush was fifth in the voting.

Leinart received 1,325 points and won all but one of the six voting regions. He came in third in the Southwest, where White led with 263 points and Peterson was second with 197.

Peterson received 997 overall points, edging out White (957) for second. Peterson's second-place finish is the best by a freshman.

Georgia's Herschel Walker (1980) and Georgia Tech's Clint Castleberry (1942) had the previous freshman high when they placed third.

Michael Vick was a redshirt freshman at Virginia Tech when he was third in 1999.

Smith, who has led Utah to a berth in the Bowl Championship Series, received 635 points, and Bush, the Trojans' explosive and versatile tailback had 597.

SEE HEISMAN ON PAGE 26



Southern Cal's Matt Leinart picks up the Heisman Trophy he won on Saturday.

Blazers of glory



Valdosta State players celebrate with the trophy after beating Pittsburg State 36-31 in the NCAA Division II championship game on Saturday in Florence, Ala. Former Florida State quarterback Fabian Walker threw two touchdowns for the Blazers. See details on Page 26.



Pats coordinator
Weis likely choice
as Irish coach

Page 26



Bryant makes sure
Lakers maintain
home rule

Page 30

Unbeaten but unranked Marquette upsets No. 24 Wisconsin Page 28